SITKA

Portal to Romance

BARRETT WILLOUGHBY

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SITKA
PORTAL TO ROMANCE

ON THE SITE OF THE OLD THLINGET FORT
Kay (bareheaded) and the author.

SITKA

PORTAL TO ROMANCE

BY

BARRETT WILLOUGHBY

With Illustrations

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TO
BOB

To know Alaska one must first know Sitka, the quaint old Russian capital where the history of the Northland was made.

Here from his stockaded log castle on the Keekor, Alexander Baranov, dare-devil little Iron Governor of the fur colonies, once ruled the North Pacific, and spun a web of power and commerce that reached to every corner of the world.

Here I lived and adventured happily and wrote this book to show an Alaskan's Alaska of to-day, where the modernity of airplane and radio joins hands with the romance of this land that is steeped in the braveries and splendor of an imperial Russian past.

BARRETT WILLOUGHBY

ILLUSTRATIONS

On the Site of the Old Thlinget Fort *Frontispiece*

Mount Edgecumbe, a Truncated Fujiyama on a Throne of Amethyst Hills 6
Photograph by Merrill, Sitka

Baranov Castle and the Keekor 10
Photograph by Claire

The Last Canoe 10
Photograph by Merrill

A War Canoe now a Show Piece for Tourists 14
Photograph by Merrill

Indian Women Selling Wild Berries at Sitka 14
Photograph by Merrill

The Sitting Wolf of the Kog-wan-tans 36
Photograph by Merrill

The Last Potlatch at Sitka 44
Photograph by Merrill

Alexander Andreevitch Baranov, First Governor of the Russian-American Fur Colonies 58
Photograph by Merrill

The First Number of the Sitka Times 84
From an original

The Vacation Cabin on the Shores of Jamestown Bay 100

The Old Russian Blockhouse, Recently Torn Down 126
Photograph by Merrill

Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel 134

When the Bishop Visits Sitka 134

Saint Michael the Archangel, the Ikon Rescued from the Wreck of the Neva 146
Photograph by Merrill

The Madonna of Kazan, for which $25,000 was Refused 146
Photograph by Merrill

Prince Dmitri Maksoutov, Last Russian Governor 160

Princess Maksoutova, Second Wife of Prince Maksoutov 160

Grigory Shelikhov, Founder of the Russian Colonies 172
After a painting in the House of the Bishops, Sitka

Count Nicolai Rezanov, Chamberlain of the Czar 172
After a painting in the House of the Bishops, Sitka

The Parade-Ground at Sitka 188
Photograph by Merrill

The Father of Pictures 214

The Mountain Cabin of the Father of Pictures 214
Photograph by Merrill

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CHAPTER I

I

THE west wind brought a night fog in from the sea, and the Northwestern, under slow bell, steamed cautiously through the narrows toward Sitka, the old Russian capital of Alaska.

'A black fog,' grumbled the grizzled night watchman who stood beside me in the bow, his brown face twisting in his effort to see ahead.

But to one not concerned with problems of navigation it was a splendid, silver mist rolling down over the tops of encircling mountains. It carried with it the freshness of upper snows, the redolence of forests I could not see, the tang of rockweed along the hidden, river-like channel. To me, a daughter of Alaska, its breath was the essence of the Northern wilderness, potent with promises of delightful things — the unknown, the unexplored, the beckoning. It took me back to childhood days when home was my father's schooner leisurely skirting these green shores of romance.

It brought to mind many a lazy, sunny afternoon when the old Tyee lay becalmed in some blue Alaskan

waterway, and my young mother, my two little brothers, and my small self played like tumbling puppies on top of the cabin. After our sails had hung slack for an hour or more, my father's head always popped up through the companionway and his gray eyes took in the surrounding water. Then in a voice attuned to a comic Irish gravity he gave the command: 'To your posts, my hearties, and whistle up a wind!'

Instantly we three youngsters scrambled to the edge of the cabin and seated ourselves in a solemn row, our chubby legs dangling. With brows puckered over intense eyes and lips protruding, we broke earnestly into the moist in-and-out whistling of childhood. If the sails did not fill immediately, my older brother Loll — always a daring one — got to his feet and delivered the magic formula taught him by the mate:

'Blow, Divil, blow! And we'll give you the cook!'

There was the thrill of danger in this magic, and we dared use it only because we had no regular cook aboard. Each member of our crew took a turn at the galley stove.

We did not know that Dad never asked our assistance until his practiced eye had detected signs of a coming breeze; hence our invariable success convinced us that on our musical efforts depended the winds that wafted the Tyee northwest along the beautiful, lonely coast of Alaska where Dad sailed in search of gold and adventure.

That was a time which left me with happy memories — memories of green bays at evening when our schooner anchored in the reflection of the shore so close

that we could see how deep and limpid were the eyes of friendly deer that came down to gaze at us. Times when the tide went out while we all slept and my father's clipper-built Tyee, listing over on the sand, slyly spilled us out of our bunks. Times when strange ships sailed in to anchor near us at sunset and, thrilling to their mystery, we youngsters climbed into a rowboat with Dad and went over to board them. In those days we believed that a ship was the natural home of children, and we were always expecting to find other white boys and girls with whom we might play.

But we never found any.

In many of the Indian villages and trading-posts along the coast we were the first white children the inhabitants had ever seen. I remember a Potlatch, a Thlinget dancing festival of savage splendor, where chiefs and their squaws fingered our golden curls with cluckings of wonder and delight as they tried to buy us from our parents with sea-otter skins.

In out-of-the-way coves we came on other Indian villages lone and deserted in the rice grass above the beach. Decaying tribal houses stood weather-white against the spruce trees, and ravens croaked soliloquies among the ruins. In such places we children built forts, or played hide-and-seek among the crumbling totem poles standing guard before the rotting thresholds. Carved totem faces, smiling in weird serenity from the forest, were as familiar to us as are billboards to the city child.

2

To many, Alaska means a crude land of gold and snow, whose history began with the reckless days of the Klondyke rush in 1897. But long before the gold strike there was a more glamorous time when the Thlingets were a mighty nation of warriors who thought nothing of traveling a thousand miles of open ocean in their painted, high-prowed canoes, and Russia's fearless *coureurs* of the sea were bargaining with them for land to build up an empire for Muscovy.

Those are the wild and colorful days that tinge all my thoughts of the North. And if my presentation of Alaska's history is touched a bit with Celtic mysticism and romance, it is because my schoolroom was the after-deck of a schooner, the teacher my Irish father sitting on the water-cask spinning yarns and pointing out the places of their happening as we sailed along.

Because of Dad and his vision we never sailed alone. He had a way of looking back through the centuries to other lands and other ways, and summoning for our company all the shadowy adventurers who have played a part in the discovery and exploration of Alaska. And because of him, they still rise for me out of the mists that blue the seas of Asia — Deshneff, the Cossack robber-knight; Benyowsky, the Polish pirate; Chirikov, the Russian; Vitus Bering, the Dane. They still come swaggering along the decks of ships as strange as the chartless seas they sailed — galiots, half-deckers, eight-oared single-masters, galleons, sloops, and ketches, and nameless flat-bottomed craft fashioned of planks, caulked with moss and spruce-pitch, and bound with

thongs of walrus hide. And back of them all, so faint as to be but a wraith of tradition, glimmer the bamboo sails of sampans, whose shipwrecked, slant-eyed crews mingled their seed with that of the Eskimos along these alien shores.

'To plunder furs in America with powder and shot and the help of God' — so came the first Russians. There followed the gold-hunting Spaniards, the land-hungry English, the exploring Frenchmen, the commercial Yankees — all venturing into the dangerous waters of this unmapped land in search of their hearts' desires. Fish and furs and gold, land and freedom and adventure — these were the lures of Alaska that drew, and that are still drawing the gypsy-hearted to follow in the wake of those first Russian ships.

As for myself, after three years spent in the States, I was coming home hungry for the romance of my father's old sea trails that stretch from Dixon's Entrance to the Alaska Peninsula flinging its chain of islands across the green of Bering Sea. I was coming back to loiter again along the Coast of Ten Thousand Isles, stopping where my fancy dictated to recapture the glamour of my country for those who might like to read about an Alaskan's Alaska.

3

As I had once leaned over the bow of the Tyee, so now I leaned on the railing of a modern steamer, watching the fog that had begun swiftly to lift. Out of the mist appeared the winding channel edged with boulders and swaying rockweed; then the spruce-

ranked shores with bits of vapor tangled in the tallest tree-tops. When the last veil was whiffed upward, clean-cut mountain ridges lay in violet silhouette against a clear, saffron sky.

Though it was midnight, it was also June, when there is no darkness in the North. Through the mystic light the steamer throbbed on around a point into a quiet, shadow-fringed bay, where the water was flecked by the high broken spangle of the moon. In the west the white crater of Mount Edgecumbe lifted itself over long-dead fires — a truncated Fujiyama on a throne of amethyst hills.

Off the port bow the distant slopes of Mount Verstovia showed powder-blue in the half-light. Hidden at its feet along the curve of the sea there slumbered, I knew, the historic old-world village of Sitka, the New Archangel of Alexander Baranov. New Archangel, the stronghold which that courageous, roistering, indomitable little Russian had erected in the very midst of the most bloodthirsty of Indian tribes! Thousands of miles from any base of supplies he had made it not only the capital of the Czar's domain in the new world, but the center of trade and civilization on the whole northwest coast of the continent. And here, for over a quarter of a century, as governor of the Russian American Fur Company, he had ruled like a king, 'his retinue, convicts from Siberia, his subjects, the hostile Indians.'

When San Francisco was little more than an adobe mission, the foundries of Sitka were casting bells with which the Spanish padres later woke the echoes in the

Copyright by Merrill, Sitka

MOUNT EDGECUMBE, A TRUNCATED FUJIYAMA ON A THRONE OF AMETHYST HILLS

honey-colored hills of California. Thirty-five years before the Golden State was adopted by Uncle Sam, the flour mills of Sitka were grinding wheat grown where Sacramento stands to-day — wheat tilled with agricultural implements fashioned in Alaska. When Chicago was but an Indian camp, the Russian colonizers at Sitka were building ships for commerce, casting cannon, making nautical instruments, and weaving cloth. In those days this Northern town was the port of call for vessels from all parts of the world, and famous among traders and adventurers for its generous hospitality.

4

I had not been in Sitka since the days when I ran barefooted with Russian playmates in the winding streets — streets paved with gravel brought from California as ballast in the 'ice-ships' which returned south with frigid cargoes that cooled the drinks of bibulous forty-niners before the invention of the ice-machine.

I was wondering how the quaint old village would look to my grown-up eyes, when the steamer entered a narrow channel where the shining water was paved with reflections from the shore. We were so close it seemed as though I might reach out and touch the green lacery of ferns and alders on either side. After the dusty blooming of the South, the vegetation here appeared exquisitely fresh and clean. I smelled the elderberry bushes flowering in the shadows of the yellow cedars.

A hermit thrush poised on the tip of a sapling, raised

his little head as we slipped by him and filled the forest with liquid melody. . . . Back in a clearing the log cabin of a fox rancher showed a moment — and was gone. His anchored launch left off mirroring itself in the water to rock in the swells from our prow. A raven, flapping up from the beach, perched on the weathered ruin of a hut that crowned the point ahead, and marked our passing with side-turned head and a solemn, questioning croak.

We swung on again into silence and another twilit waterway — and suddenly I thrilled to an old, paradoxical delight that was compounded of mystery and wonder and fear. Ahead was what the Indian playmates of my childhood had taught me to believe was the spirit of a Shaman, a witch-doctor, journeying in his spirit-canoe through the serene Alaskan night!

To be sure, the prosaic night watchman saw only a lone sea-gull afloat on a log, but I — could I help it if I believed, just a little, that an old Thlinget medicine-man was coming out to welcome me home? At the sight, my long exile in civilization dropped away from me. I was a child again, and I belonged wholly to Alaska — Alaska, wild young mother of many moods, very young as a mother, very careless, barbarian, perhaps, yet always beautiful, always alluring.

5

A turn in the channel and we were steaming into a silver bay which for loveliness has no equal in the world; a bay so dotted with small green islands that the explorer Schwatka said it could be mapped only with a

pepper-box. Between them on the right were visible long vistas of morning calm on the broad Pacific. On the left, Sitka itself came into view, a mass of mingled light and shade nested in the V of wooded mountains.

A dimming moongleam fell on the old Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel, proclaiming the very spirit of religious Russia in its golden three-barred crosses, its bulbous steeples, its jade-colored domes. In the foreground rose the high, knoll-like Keekor, which the Americans now call Castle Hill.

This rocky headland rising so precipitously from the water is the most historic spot in Alaska. It is the site of that stronghold of Baranov which once looked down over a circle of mounted guns on the greatest fur-dépôt this continent has ever known. And in the dawn of the nineteenth century, vessels entering Sitka Harbor on winter nights steered by the light that shone from the top of the castle erected on the summit. Massive, ugly, and sturdily Russian was that castle, built of great spruce logs copper-bolted and riveted to the rocks of the Keekor. In the cupola on its roof an armed sentinel paced continually, and at night a brown Aleut tended the four wide cups of seal-oil that burned before a reflector — the first lighthouse on the Pacific coast.

Yet, while that crude light shone far out among the wild islands, the walls beneath it rang to the gayety of balls and banquets that echoed the richness and military splendor then prevailing in the courts of Europe, for here were assembled, from the Imperial Court at St. Petersburg, a gallant, reckless crew of colonizers, among whom were nobles and cavaliers who had

brought their elaborate manners across the world to bend above the slim hands of Sitka's beauties.

Death lurked every moment outside the stockade, where hordes of murderous Thlingets prowled, watching for any slackening of vigilance on the part of the Russian sentinels; but within that new world castle flowed wine of regal vintage, silks and velvets billowed in the candlelight, jeweled swords and gold-laced uniforms glittered, while the merry company, scorning danger, danced their minuets to the tinkling music of the clavichord!

That castle of memories is gone now. It burned to the ground in 1894. Topping the Keekor to-day is a large modern building set primly in the midst of a flower garden. In the early morning light it loomed before my eyes, high and white above the wharf toward which my steamer was slowly moving.

But there was one thing left of that bygone time of the Russians — Governor's Walk, leading up from the dock. Governor's Walk, down which all the romantic characters of Sitka's past have sauntered to watch the ships come in! It was easy to vision them there — the level-eyed Baranov with visiting nobles stalking beside him in gay uniforms, their swords dangling at heels; haughty, treacherous Thlinget chiefs in paint and blankets; native women with labrets through their lips; squat Aleut sea-otter hunters; bearded priests in long, black robes; laughing creole beauties;[1] swaggering sea-dogs with pistols in their belts; keen-eyed

[1] The offspring of a Russian father and a native Alaskan woman is called a creole.

BARANOV CASTLE AND THE KEEKOR
Photograph taken just before the castle was burned in 1894.

Copyright by Merrill

THE LAST CANOE
The Thlinget of to-day prefers the gas-boats of the white man.

traders; fur-clad trappers — all that gay and careless company, now of the dust. . . .

I started as several figures emerged from the dim, narrow passage between two warehouses. But they proved to be sleepy dock-hands grumbling at having to get up so early to attend to the mooring of the Northwestern. After them shuffled half a dozen shawled and kerchiefed squaws lugging flour-sacks bulging with their handiwork.

As I walked aft toward my stateroom, I turned to look again at slumbering Sitka, who, like a royal old lady sure of her position in life, dares to sleep in the presence of company. The Thlinget women, squatted against the wall of the warehouse with their baskets and beaded ware spread before them on the planks, were waiting, in the patient manner of their race, for the awakening of the ship's tourists.

The ship's bell chimed half-past two, and the sun came up behind Mount Verstovia.

Then I stepped reluctantly into my stateroom to get a few hours' sleep before I went ashore to find out what the Sitka of to-day had to offer me.

CHAPTER II

I

Morning — and the sun-warmed wharf alive with the activity of steamer-day!

Men and women of Sitka stood about chatting with ship's officers. Tourists and white-jacketed waiters traded vociferously with the Indian women along the edge of the dock. Stevedores trundled their hand-trucks through the leisurely crowd.

The only motor-truck in town chugged down, making a détour to avoid a dog lying in the middle of Governor's Walk. Behind came the truck's business rival — a big brown horse drawing a seatless wagon full of little boys. Among the squirming youngsters stood the bare-headed driver, a sun-browned, laughing young giant with a shock of blond hair. The sleeves of his flannel shirt and the legs of his overalls were 'stagged'; that is, cut off at elbow and knee. As he drew up before the warehouse his animated load spilled out, their happy shrieks mingling with the clatter of the steamer's winches and the cries of expectant sea-gulls hovering about the galley portholes.

The Northwestern lay at a pier built upon the spot where, more than a century ago, old Baranov moored the hulk he used as a landing-stage. They say when the tide is very low you may still see its rotting, weed-grown timbers glimmering far down on the bottom.

I can remember the great, squared-log warehouse the

Russians built here. It burned in 1916. It was twenty-two fathoms long, with hand-hewn timbers overhead and heavy doors hung on wrought-iron hinges. Like a tunnel through its center led a dusky, low-ceilinged passage that hinted, with delightful fearsomeness, of dungeons and grim medieval things, rather than of cargoes of furs and ivory and rum.

Even in the inventory of the goods stored in the old magazine during the days of the Russian occupation, there is the romance of far places; for it held 'almost every article carried in European trade as a necessity, and many of the luxuries — sugar and sealing-wax; tobacco, both Virginia and Kirghis, silk and broadcloth, calico and Flemish linens, ravens, duck, and frieze, *arshins* of blankets and *poods* of yarn; *vedras* of rum, cognac, and gin; butter from the Yakut, from California, and from Kodiak; salt beef from Ross Colony, from England, and from Kodiak; beaver hats and cotton socks.' [1]

To-day, into the hold, the rattling winches swung cases of canned salmon and crab which had been stored in the two modern warehouses that replace the old one of logs. I made my way between them and came out on Governor's Walk, which the Americans have pointlessly rechristened Lincoln Street.

The Walk runs straight for two blocks to the Russian Church of Saint Michael, a gray clap-boarded edifice which seems to have settled serenely in the middle of the road. On my left, against the green of the Marine Parade Ground, stood the quaint summer Market of

[1] From C. L. Andrew's *The Story of Sitka.*

the Thlingets, a row of tiny, open-fronted tents which housed colorful displays on counters barely a foot off the ground. Behind each counter squatted slant-eyed native women wrapped in shawls.

These brown vendors were listening, in scornful amusement, to the tourists who bargained with them in astonishing pidgin English. Often they ceased negotiations altogether to hail one another and in excellent mission English exchange uncomplimentary remarks about their customers. But they had soft eyes for the ship's gold-braided officers, who gave them friendly greetings. And they clapped and crooned with approval when the musicians from the steamer — four university boys on vacation — capered and sang down the sunny roadway, arraying themselves in the beads and moccasins they had just purchased.

They lent themselves to a gala scene, those dark women of the once mighty Sitka Kwan, as they bartered disdainfully with members of the race their grandfathers had sworn to exterminate; yet it was a scene not without its touch of irony. For on the green directly back of their little tents stood a rust-pitted cannon once used by Baranov to rake the village of their ancestors; in the background rose the first Presbyterian Church built in Alaska — 'Powder and shot and the help of God!' And between these two civilizing agents of the white man, placed as a show-piece for curious travelers, lay a great war-canoe painted with all the symbols of the Thlinget's might — a proud, battling craft which would never again vibrate to a cry of victory or feel the touch of the sea.

A WAR CANOE NOW A SHOW PIECE FOR TOURISTS

INDIAN WOMEN SELLING WILD BERRIES AT SITKA

2

'What you dreaming 'bout here in the middle of the channel?' The pilot of the ship had rolled up alongside me. He hooked his big arm through mine and began towing me along Governor's Walk, vivid with hues of fantastic Indian handiwork.

There were pliable baskets made of spruce roots, which recorded, in designs of chrome and rust and green, the mysticism of a dying race; beaded moccasins of deerskin, of moose-hide, and of mottled hair-seal skin. There were miniature totems and canoes painted in red and turquoise and black. Carved paddles and wooden bowls. Bracelets beaten from copper and silver and gold. And string after string of trading beads, sparkling and translucent in the sun.

'Now, these old Russian beads,' explained the pilot, who believed me to be a tourist, 'are each one cut by hand. They are getting very rare, and you must be careful you don't get them mixed with the Hudson's Bay trading beads, which look something like them, only they're duller and less valuable.'

Trading beads! The adventurer's first medium of exchange with primitive peoples! In Alaska, as in other lands, they have purchased everything from furs and ivory to slaves and good will. 'You shall,' Baranov directed one of his underlings in 1796, 'present the Chief of the Chilcats with a frieze coat with ermine trimmings and from six to ten fathoms of blue beads.'

We stopped before a patched tent yellowed by the rains of many summers. Back of the low counter within sat a tiny Indian woman on a chair that had

been shorn of all but four inches of its legs. Her face, the hue of old ivory, showed scarcely a line, but the thick hair that escaped from her head-kerchief was white as lime. About her shoulders lay a fawn-colored shawl as clean as if she had that day taken it from the trading-post shelf.

She smiled up at us, eager and winning as a child.

'G-o-o-d! *Hiyu* good bowl!' she cried in long drawn syllables, her little brown finger indicating two black wooden bowls, one shaped like a frog, one like a bear. 'My Stepan — he make-um so —' Her hands moved quickly as if carving. 'You see dis one?' Her voice took on a gay note and her dark eyes glowed as she caught up a tom-tom and began tapping it.

The savage *oom oom oom oom* floated out along the commercial row of tents.

'Dance! Dance!' she urged, her small body swaying to the rhythm.

I held the drum and struck it, but my hand had forgotten the way of wielding the padded stick.

'N-o-o-o good!' With laughing scorn she took the instrument from me and, much to the amusement of the other squaws, proceeded to give me a lesson.

I bought the tom-tom, and the bowl made like a frog.

'You come back maybe af-teer by and by!' She waved to us as we continued along the graveled walk.

'That's Woman-Always-Wondering,' the pilot said. 'Cute little cuss, isn't she? Her husband, Stepan, is the greatest carver and artist among the Kog-wantans. In fact, he's about the only one left now. It won't be long before the old Indian arts are forgotten, for the

young bucks of to-day have no time for them. They'd rather run gas-boats for the canneries.'

We had come to a place where a wide wooden stairway climbed up through a thicket of flowering elderberries and wild roses that grew on the steep slope of the Keekor. On top, half hidden in greenery, was the semi-colonial building which now occupies the site of Baranov Castle. The American flag hung from the roof-pole, and off to one side a shaft of white marble rose above a hedge of Shasta daisies.

'That monument marks the spot where the Alaska Transfer was made in 1867. Right there is where the Stars and Stripes first floated over the country.' The pilot squinted up at the diminutive shaft which, it must be confessed, looks rather like a gravestone. 'Yah,' he said dryly, 'our Government gave the Russians seven million two hundred thousand dollars for Alaska. Since then, the country has produced nearly a billion and a half in fur and fish and gold and timber. Why, from the surplus timber to be cut under contracts made this year alone, the United States Treasury will receive eight million seven hundred thousand dollars!' He spat in the roadway and jerked his thumb toward the monument. 'Know how much it cost — that thing which commemorates the best bargain Uncle Sam ever made? *Seven hundred and fifty dollars!* Huh! I'd erect a better headstone over my dog! But excuse me. No use of my getting boiled up again over that. . . . The house up there is the headquarters of the Agricultural Department of the Territory.'

The pilot's face resumed its usual lines of good na-

ture and, nodding toward the long flight of steps, he chuckled: 'Holy Sailor! In the old days many and many a foreign sea captain's been carried down that hill to his ship — after Baranov had drunk him under the table!'

We passed the long building that once formed a part of the barracks in which the Siberian Line Battalion was quartered. Its two-foot logs have been covered with siding, painted white. Since the advent of the Americans it has been used as a courthouse and jail.

Next door, a small crowd was gathered before the post-office, which was the counting-house in the days of the Russian occupation. This old building also has the distinction of having sheltered American women and children during a Thlinget siege. To-day half a dozen squaws huddled against it, their wares spread out on the sidewalk. Good-natured citizens of Sitka stepped around them to go inside for their once-a-week mail. Men and women, coming out, paused on the sidewalk to read their letters, turning now and then to call a bit of news to a neighbor. Others walked off, their arms piled high with newspapers and mail-order packages.

We strolled on past the open doors of little shops, and windows cluttered with post-cards, totems, suits of khaki, and drugs, all hobnobbing democratically; past the red doors of the moving-picture house, advertising a screaming drama of a West that never existed outside of Hollywood; past an up-to-the-minute department store carrying everything from sheer chiffon négligées to traps for grizzly bears.

Across the street, behind a line of flowering mountain ash trees, stood a wide building with a broad sagging veranda. Its white paint had a look of having been applied over many a peeling layer.

'Hotel Millmore,' the pilot read the sign. 'That's where poor Lady Franklin stayed along in the 1870s, when she was awaiting news of her husband who'd gone up into the Arctic looking for the Northwest Passage. In one of the rooms they still have the big, dark bed she slept in, all put together with wooden pegs. A brave and proper sailor's wife she was, too, my dear, for all she wore a title. Her husband never came back, and they say sometimes on stormy nights you can hear her sighing in that old house. . . .'

Governor's Walk now made a semicircular turn to avoid the Russian Church of Saint Michael. A group of tourists were surging up the steps at the heels of a young cassocked priest who was swinging an enormous, medieval-looking key in his hand. We passed, and came to another of the great houses of hewn logs that marked Sitka's Golden Age. The quaint, fan-shaped window in the gable was still unbroken, but the walls were settling to ruin. Indian celery held its blooms, like creamy parasols, six feet high against the rotting sides. The sea breeze stirred the scent of sun-warmed briar roses about its base logs.

I took a deep breath of the perfume — and the next instant choked on an overpowering blast of nicotine. It rose from the edge of the sidewalk almost at our feet. A stubby little old man sat there all but concealed beneath a broad, black hat. Between his hands

he was rubbing a mink pelt, puffing furiously the while on his pipe.

'Well, I swan! If it isn't Israel, the fur-buyer!' exclaimed the pilot. 'Hello, old-timer! How goes the skin game this year?'

The hat shifted, disclosing a strong, kindly face. 'Ach!' retorted Israel, with a wave of the mink skin. 'It hass my goat!' And he burst dramatically into a recital of woes.

'Let me tell you!' he shouted, oblivious to the eyeing of curious tourists. 'Let me tell you! Dat Rosenbaum of the Douglas Fur Com-pan-ee, he calls me a kike-Jew — a cheater of Indians! *Me*, Israel, who hass in dis country bought furs since 1889! He tries to buy from the Indians the furs cheap. And vat iss it he does now?' Israel glared into my face. 'He tell dem dat Israel iss dead! *Dead!* No odder vay vill dey sell to him — only if dey think old Israel iss dead and vill not come. Dey lofe me because I always speak dem the truth. It makes me strong wit dem. Don't I bust the fur trust for dem in Sitka twenty years ago? Don't dey a chief make off me in the tribe? But dat Rosenbaum — Ach, *Gott*, he iss the skunk behind my back. He would poke the eye out off a man for five cents! But I get even! I tell him' — Israel shook his fist under my nose — 'I tell him: "You get one skin next year, Rosenbaum, *one pelt*, and by Himmel, I vill eat it raw!" '

The pilot patted the old fur-buyer's knee. 'Yes, yes. We all know Rosenbaum, Israel,' he said soothingly. 'Never mind him now. Tell me how your

daughter is getting along since she married in the States.'

Swiftly the fur-buyer's face changed. His expressive brown eyes beamed paternal love and pride. He smiled as he extended both upturned palms. 'Ah-a-a, dat Rosie,' he crooned. 'My leetle one. Right away ven she comes back from her honey-trip, for her I haff bought a chicken establishment in Bend, Oregon, for ten t'ousand dollar. Dose fresh eggs! You should ought to see dem — *in t'ousands!* And now she hass a grandfadder made off me! Always she writes me: "Papa, come to us." But I write her: "*Nein, liebchen, nein.* Not till my moving picture it iss done."'

'Moving picture, Israel?' The pilot was plainly surprised. 'What moving picture?'

'Ach! You haff not heard?' Tremendous astonishment shrilled in the old man's voice. 'You haff not heard dat Israel makes off Alaska a moving picture?'

When he learned that neither of us had heard, he rushed into an explanation.

'Ah-a-a, but you haff seen dem — dose silliness of Alaska movies dey are making in California? Yes? Vell, ven I am in Seattle, always I get the heartsick for my Alaska — the lonesome. I go to see dose pictures. But, ach ——' he spread his upturned palms and with head on one side drew up his chin in distaste. 'Vat iss it? It iss snowing. It is blizzard. And dat damn hero he iss staggering t'rough the forest of the eucalyptus tree on the foolishness of snowshoes from Montgomery Ward and Com-pan-ee. And — Gott in Himmel —

he hass on hiss shoulder *the gunny-sack full of nuggets!* Bah! Dose pictures are to me disgust! Dey are not true! So I, Israel, now I write one of my own, vat you call scenario. Ah-a-a, you should ought to read it! Such an elegant lofe story — such a *sweet* lofe story! You got a heart like stone — you cry!'

Israel went on to tell of his scenario in which an Indian maiden, Song-of-a-Bird, and her lover, Eye-of-a-Deer, figured prominently. The plot was historical and astonishingly good. He was now, he informed us, on his way to the famous Indian village of Kluckwan, up in the Valley of the Chilcat, where he had arranged with eight Thlinget chiefs to put on a real Potlatch once more before the old ways vanish before the march of civilization.

'The Crows, the Ravens, the Eagles, the Wolfs — dey vill do diss for Israel's moving picture, because dey lofe him!' continued the old man. 'All der wonderful blankets vill dey bring out for Israel; der war-bonnets, der drums, der rattles, der masks! And haff you heard' — his voice sank to a whisper as he darted a cautious glance to either side — 'haff you heard off the Worm, the great Potlatch dish twenty feet long? Haff you heard off the Mother Basket? Ah-a-a! Dey are the secret no white man but Israel knows. He vill haff dem in hiss moving picture. And old Heavy-wings, chief of the Ravens, he hass a scalp off a white man he vill wear at my Potlatch. Ach, the money I haff offer dat savage for dat scalp! But nuh, nuh. He vill not sell. It iss the scalp off hiss enemy who a great wrong hass done him. Heavy-wings hass affection for it be-

cause he killed him. But you shall see it in my moving picture. You shall see dis scalp dance!'

For several minutes I had been aware that some one was calling Israel from a shop near by. He answered now, and, leaving me still wanting to hear more of his moving picture, he moved off waving his mink pelt in friendly farewell.

'There goes one of the most lovable old characters in Alaska,' said the pilot, as we strolled onward. 'In addition to being as rich as a gold king, he's got a heart in him as big as Mount McKinley.'

3

We crossed a little bridge. The buildings, which all along Governor's Walk had shut out the bay, here ended abruptly at a sawmill. But it was a picturesque saw mill completely embowered in elderberry bushes that mingled the scent of their blossoms with the tang of the sea. Beyond it the road, called 'The Promenade of the Russians,' followed the semicircle of the shore to a distant wooded point. There were houses on one side, but on the other Indian celery, ferns, and buttercups grew down to the edge of the water. The tide was out and rockweed fringed the sandy beach with russet, amber, and green. Surf ducks paddled about. Sea-gulls winnowed their way across the quiet bay, and in the swash of the gentle surf a dozen or more youngsters in bathing-suits were splashing about or riding in canoes.

As we sauntered along the Promenade old squaws sidled past us, heads bowed under black silk handkerchiefs, skirts trailing like fishes' tails. Some wore

shawls. The shapeless torsos of others were buttoned into wrinkled, long coats with fitted waist-lines and leg-o'-mutton sleeves.

A pretty Thlinget girl, with a bareheaded Indian youth on either arm, strolled by — students from the Sheldon Jackson Mission School. The sun shone on their jet-black hair, their clean, copper-hued faces, their white teeth flashing as they laughed. They were dressed in the collegiate manner, the boys in corduroys and vivid red-and-white checked sweaters, the girl in smart sports clothes.

Shuffling directly behind them came a gray-haired, crippled Indian with the face of an impish child. His hands were held in front of him like the paws of a dancing bear. He smiled at us with pathetic and foolish friendliness. 'Poor devil,' said the pilot. 'He's Jimmy the Bear Boy.'

Before I could question him he continued: 'There's the House of the Bishops, the old monastery where Russian youths were once trained for priesthood.' He indicated a white, two-story building so long that the roof sagged in the center. It had many high, narrow windows, Russian windows with tiny panes set in wide strips of wood. A tall silver spruce tree grew on either side of the gate.

While we looked, the door opened and framed for a moment a priest in a cassock. 'In the old days that was the finest house in Sitka, next to the castle,' the pilot informed me. 'There are still some mighty interesting things in there, but they don't allow tourists to see them. I've never seen them either, though

I've tried many a time. Russia's greatest missionary, Father Ivan Veniaminov, built the House of the Bishops in 1842, and lived there. He planted those spruce trees himself. He was so good at his job that he became Metropolitan of Russia, but at that he was also a regular fellow and a great favorite with sea captains from all points of the compass. They used to make it a point to come here to Sitka just to get him to fix up their sick barometers. He made the big clock in the tower of Saint Michael's Church, too.

'But see — just beyond is the little Episcopal Church, built by our own Bishop Rowe — Saint Peter's-by-the-Sea. Everybody in Alaska knows him, and sets a heap of store by him. He's such a darned human, lovable cuss, somehow, that wherever he goes he starts a stampede for heaven.'

I recalled what Ella Higginson has written of this noted Alaskan: 'He is the Bishop of All Alaska, and the Beloved of All Men. He it is who carries over land and sea, over ice and everlasting snow, over far tundra wastes and down the lone and mighty Yukon in his solitary canoe or bidarka, by dog team and on foot, to white people and dark, the simple, sweet and blessed message of love.'

To-day, however, the Bishop visits his most distant Alaskan missions by airplane. Though he does not now make Sitka his home, his church of rough gray stone and sun-browned shingles stands in the center of grassy, tree-bordered grounds, and its doors are always open to the sea.

We walked on without speaking for a while. A

humming-bird with green and crimson throat, hovered in our path — and was gone. From a line of spruce trees on the point ahead a raven sent out a hollow, non-resonant croak. I watched a man hurrying toward us along the road — a small, slender man in clerical black. Though he had an immense market basket on his arm, he walked with the quick, springy step of youth, and there was a fine jauntiness to the set of his hat and the swing of his coat tails. He recognized the pilot with a sweep of his Fedora and a blithe greeting. His hair and Vandyke were white, but his skin was smooth and his sapphire-blue eyes were bright as a boy's.

'How's the hunting, Father?' called the pilot.

'Fine! Fine! I hit everything I pointed at!' returned the little man as he sped by.

'That's Father Andrew Kashevaroff, the fighting priest,' announced my companion. 'He's a Russian Alaskan and knows more about this country, so they say, than any other man living. He's over from Juneau to spend his vacation here — this used to be his parish — and I'll bet right now he's taking some of the delicacies the women have sent him to some rascally old Indian who's pretending to be sick. You ought to hear him tell of the ancient people who roamed these Alaskan valleys when the country was semi-tropical. They hadn't a dud on 'em, except a sort of petticoat made of cedar bark.'

The pilot ceased speaking as we drew up beside a large flat-topped stone at the edge of the high-tide mark. I knew it for the Wishing Stone to which all the

lovers of Sitka have come since the days of Baranov. History says that the little Czar himself, lonely with the loneliness of the great, came often to sit on the Stone and look out on the blue, island-dotted bay. Cut in the top of the rock are half obliterated names and dates commemorating the visits of ships since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

'Some people call this the Blarney Stone,' said the pilot. 'Many and many a girl I've brought here from the ship to make a wish. If you kiss it, my dear, it will bring you speech that will charm the very birds out of the trees — so they say.' He laughed, his blue eyes shining whimsically. 'Come now — make your wish, and round we go!'

I did not tell the pilot that this was not my first visit to the Stone; nor how I remembered my father's tramping about it, drawing behind him, like the tail of a kite, my laughing young mother, my small brothers, and the little girl I used to be. Instead I followed at his heels, circling the worn path three times, according to the wishing rite. Then I bent and kissed the Stone.

I wished, with all my heart, that I might be given the words to put into this book I am writing the beauty and charm of Alaska.

The pilot sat down to rest his rheumatic leg. 'Look here,' he directed, tracing some nearly obliterated letters. '"K-l-n — ff 1832." That's Khlebnikoff's name and the year he carved it here. He wrote a biography of Alexander Baranov and —— But yonder comes a man who knows all about this old

stuff. Name's Merrill. He's one of these artistic fellows who doesn't know the value of a dollar. Doesn't believe in the preacher's God. He figures that God is in the trees and the mountains and the sea, and he shocks some of the good Church people who think the Lord camps only in a place with a steeple on it. He doesn't care for women, either.

'He's something of a naturalist. Got a little cabin down in the woods where he studies birds. Got some mummies, also, and stone axes, and prehistoric junk he's dug up round these islands.

'He's been up here — oh, gosh knows how long. But he's educated. Harvard, and all that. The Indians call him "The Father of Pictures," because he's considered the best water-color artist in the North. And, by jacks, I'll say he's about the only one I've seen who can paint an Alaskan sunset so it doesn't look as if some heavy guy had just stepped on half an orange!'

The approaching Father of Pictures was the kind of man you like to look at — very tall and slender, wearing clean faded khakis with an air of aristocratic distinction. He strode along, hatless, free-moving. His bare, fine-textured throat rose from the open collar of his flannel shirt; his chin was lifted as if he was accustomed to look long distances. Heavy black hair, a trifle long, swept back from his fine forehead, and his gray eyes, set in a tanned intellectual face, wore an expression of deep serenity, of quiet happiness.

'But he positively doesn't like women,' repeated the pilot, after the Northerner had passed. 'You know most of the chaps who have lived up here a long time

have some sort o' woman scandal connected with them. But the Father of Pictures — why, you can't get his worst enemy to say he's ever so much as *looked at a squaw!*' Being an Alaskan, I knew this to be the supreme tribute to masculine virtue. 'But to-day I heard that there's a mighty pretty little blonde widow spending the summer here, and she's been —— But pshaw! Here I'm gossiping like an old woman.'

The pilot was in no hurry to leave his seat on the Wishing Stone, so I sat down beside him, hoping he would continue his interesting monologue.

'Yonder comes one of the boys from the Old Pioneers' Home here. God bless 'em, they've opened up the wildest, most beautiful country in the world, and they deserve the best that's going!' he pronounced heartily.

The 'boy' in question was an old man bent forward like a half-hoop. He teetered along the road without a cane. His eyes were hidden behind smoked glasses. His chin, with its wisp of white beard, quivered as he returned our greetings. Nevertheless, there was about him an indefinable air of youth and cheerfulness.

'Yas, I'm goin' down to Lover's Lane,' he quavered. 'I go down there every day. I like to walk there, though I 'spect I'm gettin' too old for them things now. . . . Oh, yas, I like it well enough here at the Home, though I'd never of bin here if it hadn't bin for liquor — and women. Lots of liquor — and one woman. It's as good as any other place to wait in. I reckon I won't be here long now — I'm goin' on eighty-eight years old,' he added, just as the joyous

melody of a hermit thrush thrilled through the sunshine of the young day.

'Oh, oh, don't think about that,' I interrupted in quick sympathy. Then because he would so soon know what lies beyond this plane of life, I asked: 'When your passing comes, sir, don't you think it will be just a going on to another happier state of existence?'

'I'd like to think that, young lady,' he answered, raising his dim, spectacled eyes as he stood bent before me. 'I'd like to think that. Some days, b'gosh, I *do* think it — days like this when the sun's shinin' on the bay and they's a smell like pine trees that reminds me of when I was young. . . . But rainy days when the wind blows — I don't know. Then I reckon maybe this is the end of everything. . . . But I'm not kickin'. I like it here and I 'spect I'm lucky, too. I come to this country thirty-seven year ago, and I had sixty mules packin' in on the Stikine River when the great stampede was on. Yas, I had sixty mules, and I made a mint o' money. But now' — there was a catch in his brave old voice — 'but now, b'gosh, I ain't got *nothin'*. I wouldn't mind so much, but my eyes give out on me, and I can't read no more. Oh, yas, they read the papers to us at the Home — but it's tough when a fellow can't do his own readin'.' He gave his thin shoulders a twitch. 'I figger by next spring, though, I'll be able to get a little grub-stake and go out in the hills prospectin',' he continued hopefully. 'Yas, maybe I will. . . . My name's Daniel Hire. Maybe you heard of me. I had sixty mules packin' in on the Stikine when the big stampede was on in '85. . . . Well, I must

be gettin' along now. Good-bye, young lady . . . Good-bye!' His high old voice died away as he hobbled on down the road that led to Lover's Lane.

The pilot watched him. 'Eighty-eight — and still walking in Lover's Lane,' he said slowly. 'Well, I've been on this Alaska run for twenty-five years now, and *I* always walk in Lover's Lane when I come to Sitka. All us old sea-dogs do. Some say it's enchanted. . . . I don't know but what it is. I like best to walk there about sundown. . . . Then I think of all the women I have loved.' He straightened his big, athletic body. His face, lean, fresh-looking, with thick white hair showing beneath his officer's cap, made me wonder what a man he must have been at twenty-five. 'I'm sixty-five now — but I like to remember.' He patted my hand absent-mindedly.

'Captain,' I announced, after we had both been silent awhile. 'If I stay here only while your steamer lies at the dock, I'll never be able to find out the ending of all the stories you've hinted at this morning. So I'm going back to the ship now to get my luggage put off. Then I'm going to hunt an hotel.'

'I swan, if that isn't just like a female! Never contented unless she knows the finish of every story! Well, all right, my dear. All right. Just a minute and I'll go back with you to help.' He started to come to his feet.

'Indeed, no, Captain. You've laid your course for Lover's Lane — and you must keep on,' I persuaded him.

Then, with my frog bowl under one arm and my tom-tom under the other, I turned and retraced my steps along the curving white road that led back to the steamer.

CHAPTER III

I

It had been my intention, while staying in Sitka, to live at the Millmore Hotel so that I might sleep in the big, dark bed of Lady Franklin and, perhaps, hear the shade of that lovely, faithful woman sighing through the old halls. But the crowded condition of that hostelry forced me to seek other lodgings.

The Erler was also an hotel, though I never should have suspected it if its small black-and-silver sign hadn't said so. It was a white, old-fashioned country house standing just off the Promenade of the Russians. On one side was a clear mill-stream; on the other a narrow, winding lane bordered with dandelions and raspberry bushes. Pestchourov Street is the grand name of this lane, commemorating the Russian commissioner who, in 1867, negotiated the sale of Alaska and gave the order for the lowering of the Czar's flag.

The riotous flower garden in front of the hotel was hemmed in by a picket fence over which nasturtiums cascaded in sunset colors. Sweet peas bloomed six feet high against the walls of the house, and there were prim beds of white and purple irises, candy-tuft, and chubby pink daisies. Beside the steps a lilac bush was bursting its lavender buds, and a line of mountain ash trees made a little snow of petals on the walk that led to the Erler's door.

Like all arriving guests, I rang the doorbell and was

admitted by the proprietor — tall, deep-bosomed Mrs. Sallie Taylor. Her starched gingham dress fitted snugly and was belted at her high waist-line. Her large pink arms were bare to the elbow. Immaculate skirts cleared an enormous pair of elastic-sided gaiters which gave her feet a Charlie-Chaplin look. But she immediately informed me, with the confidential air that accompanied her most commonplace utterances, it was only in hot weather when her feet swelled that she wore her 'old man's' shoes.

At a table in the tiny hallway I registered in a book-keeper's journal to which a blunt pencil was attached by a string. In the sunny dining-room beyond I could see well-filled china closets, a long white table, and a bird singing in a cage above flowering window plants. From the kitchen came delectable odors of home-cooked things — fresh bread, cinnamon *küchen*, hot apple sauce.

I found later that Mrs. Taylor was her own excellent cook. She charged fifty cents for meals, which included soup, salad, and dessert; and on Sundays there was always an old-fashioned dinner of chicken and dumplings. She sent her red-cheeked Russian maid to urge guests to second helpings. Often she came to the doorway herself, and stood there, ladle in hand, ready to add her bit of a joke or laugh to the general conversation.

When one left for a jaunt to the woods or mountains, Mrs. Taylor was sure to bustle out breathlessly at the last minute brandishing a paper bag. 'Just a clean bite,' she would say with a hurried pat on one's back.

The 'bite' consisted of an enormous wedge of pie, two man-sized sandwiches, and an apple or an orange. These lunches were considered too meager to be put on one's bill.

The Erler boasted two bathrooms — spacious, sunny rooms as large as the living-room of an ordinary city apartment. They were as clean and white as paint and 'elbow-grease' could make them, and were supplied with unlimited quantities of hot water and piles of thick towels smelling of the sun and wind in which they had dried.

'Of course,' Mrs. Taylor warned me, 'sometimes I may be "full" when the steamer brings in some old-time guests of mine. Then I'll have to put cots in the bath-rooms. But' — her confidential voice was reassuring — 'those guests will always be men, so you needn't hesitate to take a bath. Really, men are never in their rooms, except to sleep. You know how it is' — she shrugged — 'they like best to prowl on the streets or set in pool-rooms.'

There was also a possibility that a bridal couple might engage a room and one of the baths. 'Whenever we see the Commissioner coming uptown with a white collar on him, we know some one is going to get married,' Mrs. Taylor went on. 'Last week, though, he had one on, and we were all stirred up wondering who. But come to find out it was because the Governor was expected — ha! ha! — and we all got fooled!'

She took me upstairs to my room — a large one with twin beds, each with a gay-colored blanket folded across the foot. I found hot and cold water, electric

lights, and a steam radiator large enough to cause a city apartment-house manager to faint away; though in June, of course, there was no need for either artificial heat or light in Sitka. There were two immense easy-chairs, and a library table over which hung a steel engraving showing a solemn row of Presidents from Washington to Roosevelt. The floor coverings were black bear rugs and one tawny seven-foot wolfskin. Mrs. Taylor told me that the wolf, when killed by her husband up on the Tanana, had weighed a hundred and ninety pounds. Its paws had a five-inch spread. She added that it had 'et her old man's pardner.'

2

Well pleased with my lodgings, I went back to the dock to watch the Northwestern move slowly out of the harbor. I stood waving good-bye until the steamer vanished beyond the islands. Then I strolled up Governor's Walk past the Market of the Thlingets.

Already the row of tents stood empty in the noon sunshine. Across the parade ground on the path that led to the Indian village a dozen brown women were moving with the slow hip-slipping gait of the race. Business was over, not only for the day, but until the next steamer brought tourists a week hence.

I was marveling at the rapidity with which the occupants of the little tents had vanished, when an insistent voice called: '*Ah cgoo! Ah cgoo!* Come here!'

It was little Woman-Always-Wondering sitting all alone in her tent. She smiled at me and nodded. 'Me wait. Rheumatism,' she explained cheerfully. As she

came slowly to her feet I saw she was a cripple. 'Bime-by my husbant he come for me.'

I helped her gather up her totems and nest her baskets in a flour-sack, before I squatted down beside her to keep her company while she waited.

'My husbant, my Stepan, he come. He high caste Thlinget man,' she declared proudly. 'L-o-n-g time ago he boss dancer, he boss singer of the Kog-wan-tans. My Stepan — *he* do dis one!' She caught up a tom-tom and pointed to its adornment, the conventionalized figure of a sitting wolf. Splendidly savage, the thing stood out in black and red and cobalt coloring, its boldness and purity of line proclaiming the hand of an artist.

In quaint, halting English she explained that the Sitting Wolf was the crest animal of the Kog-wan-tans, her husband's tribe. The queer face painted on the stomach was the great spirit of the Wolf; the figures on each side, which looked to me like eyes, were his foot-prints. She turned the tom-tom over and showed me that the deerskin of which it was made was pegged to the frame with wooden pins carved from yellow cedar. Other natives, she scornfully informed me, used the brass tacks of the white man, and thus spoiled the tone of their drums.

'My Stepan, he make-um drum so-o-o-o big!' Her little arms measured off about four feet. 'Maybe you come my house now look-see?'

I accepted her invitation.

We were putting the last of her belongings into a sack when she pointed to the channel where a bare-

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THE SITTING WOLF OF THE KOG-WAN-TANS

Brought out only for great potlatches. Stepan stands at the right.

headed man was paddling a canoe toward us. 'My Stepan!' she crooned, clasping her hands on her breast like a delighted child.

Her Stepan landed. He was a short, stocky Indian with the powerful shoulders of the canoe-man. His olive-drab shirt and faded overalls were as clean as if they had just come from the laundry. Thick gray hair topped his serious, square face, and smoked glasses hid his eyes. When he learned that I was about to go home with them, he turned to me with a quick, shy smile.

'You welcome!' he said cordially.

He assisted Wondering and myself into the canoe, and we shoved off into the channel.

3

The water was deep and clear with a faint blue-green tinge like glass; every stone and shell and weed, fathoms below, was visible. From the azure sky, where puff-ball clouds hung motionless, sunshine filtered down on the northern world. It sparkled on the sapphire of glacier-studded peaks. It wooed the vapors rising from the foothills into gauzes of plum and lapis-lazuli and rose. It bronzed the cones of the spruce trees that crowded every rocky islet in the bay. Seagulls drifted lazily across our vision. Ahead in the channel a man stood in a dory rowing with long leisurely strokes. A V-shaped wake rippled behind him, amethyst on silver.

As we glided along I felt myself slipping back with tranquil old Sitka into that blessed state of serenity that

comes of knowing there is no need for haste — there is plenty of time to do all one has to do.

We came at last to the Indian village, a row of unpainted frame houses facing us above a grassy bank. The canoe glided between the zigzag reflections of two slanting piles. The next moment Stepan beached his craft and we stepped ashore.

Up half a dozen wooden steps we climbed to a path that cut through vegetation, lush and green with the luxuriance of Alaskan summer. Rice grass, waist-deep, caught the sunlight like polished rapiers. The warm air was pungent with the scent of Indian celery, which spread broad leaves and hoisted creamy flowers that made landing places for butterflies. Crimson-vested bumblebees worked energetically in lupine blossoms, and dandelions sent their winged seeds floating after us as we passed.

In this drowsy noon hour we saw no natives moving about the village. The blank, uncurtained windows of the Thlinget houses gave them a false air of emptiness. . . . Along our path, like pieces of red flannel on a clothesline, split salmon hung drying in the sun. Our passing raised a cloud of big, blue flies — and there were the inevitable smells. . . . An Indian dog slunk away, with a wary, backward look over his shoulder. . . . On a doorstep farther on huddled an ancient, blanketed Indian whose gray head nodded mechanically. Beside him, on the grass, a great white marble bear sat on its haunches, sunlight glittering on its gilded eyes and claws and teeth.

The bear, Stepan informed me, was a monument.

When Nuk-wan, the canoe-maker, died, his widow wished to honor his memory after the manner of the white people, who mark their graves with tombstones depicting sorrowing angels and little lambs. Accordingly, she placed an order in Seattle for a marble bear, Nuk-wan's crest animal. It arrived — price, three hundred dollars. Admiring Thlingets erected it on the grave. But the Russian priest, being a far-sighted man, realized that unless he intervened the cemetery would soon look like a marble menagerie. 'He 'fraid *other* Injuns have stone eagle, frog, whale, wolf, in graveyard,' finished Stepan. 'He no like. He make Nuk-wan's 'ooman put bear by her house.'

As we passed along, the windows of the larger dwellings filled up with curious brown faces. But Stepan did not live in one of those community houses. Because of his high caste he and Wondering had a cabin to themselves. Like a little gray animal face it looked out of an elderberry thicket, its eyes two small windows, its mouth, the door between. Back of it, on a ridge, bloomed a tangle of wild roses, in the midst of which a tall Greek cross held its arms over the graveyard where the Princess Maksoutova lies buried.

Stepan ascended three steps to his door, opened it, and stood smiling down at me. 'You come in my house, you all same *shawut* Kog-wan-tan.' Thus, with Indian courtesy, he welcomed me and made me for the time being a woman of his own tribe.

There was a delightful incongruity about Stepan's home. Against the farther wall stood an old-fashioned

organ with a hymn-book open on the rack. Above, dominating the room, hung a house-board, perhaps seven feet long and three wide, on which was painted the grotesque figure of the Ko-na-ka-det, the weird, mythical monster that brings good luck to the Thlinget hunter. The colors were dim with years and the smoke of many lodge-fires — fires in whose warmth, no doubt, Stepan had squatted in his heathen youth. On each side of this relic of primitive superstition was tacked a large printed motto. 'Fear the Lord,' commanded one. 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' warned the other.

There was a huge, clean bed piled with a dozen pillows in bleached sugar sacks. A little pot-bellied stove stood in the center of the room. Brightening the shadows about the walls were several carved boxes and vermilion chests, the latter as new apparently as some I had seen a month before in San Francisco's Chinatown. These Chinese chests, found in nearly every village along the Alaskan coast, are relics of those days when the Russians sailed to Canton with cargoes of fur and ivory, and brought back the painted boxes filled with tea.

Woman-Always-Wondering squatted on a floor-mat, drew an unfinished basket from its wrappings, and resumed her weaving. Stepan flicked a red bandanna from his back pocket and, looking very likable and pudgy, dusted off a chair for me. Then, marching over to one of the vermilion chests, he opened it with the air of one uncovering treasure.

From the depths he brought forth a photograph,

the likeness of a commanding-looking, bearded man garbed in the fashion of the eighties.

'My fliend Brady — he governor!' he exclaimed, breathing heavily with importance as he handed me the picture.

From her mat his little, lame wife nodded and proudly echoed: 'My Stepan, he fliend!'

'First time he come Sitka I am boy — maybe fifteen, seventeen times I see the salmon run,' said Stepan. His English came slowly, with many pauses and deep breathings between words.

I made a swift calculation. Though Stepan looked as sturdy as a silver spruce, he should now be well over sixty. I wondered if he had been among those Indians who attended the first meeting called by that John G. Brady who, as one of the first Presbyterian missionaries, came in 1878 to the Territory he was later to govern. 'The natives made their appearance in bare feet, unbleached cotton trousers, sheath-knives in belts, gaudy Hudson's Bay blankets, long hair, and with decorations painted on their faces,' reads a record of that event.

Stepan showed me three other photographs, all of missionaries, saying impressively, as he presented each one: 'My fliend!' And Wondering, with clasped hands and bright looks at me, invariably echoed: 'He fliend! *Every-bod-ee* love my Stepan!'

'Me Christian now,' finished the old Indian gravely. 'Me deacon in Church. See ——' He led me to the organ and indicated the hymn-book. 'You play, please.'

I sat down before the wheezy instrument and began 'Onward Christian Soldiers.' Stepan and Wondering giggled a bit, but presently began singing shyly in Thlinget. At the conclusion of the last verse, Stepan made a sudden dive into a carved chest and, puffing from exertion, came up holding the largest Bible I have ever seen.

'My Stepan, he deacon now,' piped Wondering, pointing to her husband's name on the fly-leaf of the Book.

The deacon heaved a sudden, deep sigh. 'Yes,' he said heavily. 'Me heap savvey Jesus now.'

Having thus established himself as a Christian, seriousness slipped from him. He laid his Bible on the bed, and removing his smoked glasses, which I suspect were worn for show, he handed me a letter to read. It was from a man in Boston asking Stepan to carve for him one of the bear bowls I had seen in Wondering's tent in the Market. The bowl, just finished, was now lifted from its flour-sack wrappings by Stepan, and set out for my admiration. It was a barbaric hollow oblong three feet in length. Over each end clambered a little black bear, abalone-shell eyes gleaming, bone teeth flashing in the merriest way.

'White man pay my Stepan forty donna for dis!' proclaimed Woman-Always-Wondering.

Stepan ran his hands caressingly over the laughing bears as he explained that this particular design was conceived to commemorate a great Peace Potlatch given after the Ketchikans had fought the Kog-wantans, 'long ago.' At that time a Potlatch dish, twelve

feet long and three wide, had been made. When the feast was ready, the chief of each tribe sat watching, one at either end of the dish, while all the warriors and women danced about it, dipping their hands in and eating. Stepan acted all this out for me, ending his pantomime with an astonishing leap and a loud laugh.

'*Every-bod-dee* dance, eat together! Every-bod-dee have plenty good time, long, l-o-n-g ago!'

Obviously it was this 'good time' expression which Stepan, the artist, had carved on the faces of his jolly little black bears.

In his own dramatic way he went on to tell me of the tests of appetite which are always a feature of Potlatch feasts. The man who eats the most attains honor in the tribe. One famous eater at this particular feast drank three pints of seal-oil by way of an appetizer, and finished with four dried salmon and five quarts of spawn mixed with oil. But the winner in this contest drank such quantities of oil that, with the last triumphant swallow, he fell dead, the oil running out of his ears, eyes, and mouth — so Stepan assured me.

To uphold the gastronomic powers of my own race, I told of the man in Washington who recently achieved headlines in the press by eating thirty-eight raw eggs in thirteen minutes. And of the man in Maine who consumed twenty-one waffles at a sitting. Those feats left my listeners cold; but when I gave them a detailed description of a pie-eating contest I had once witnessed at a Fourth-of-July celebration, they both roared with amusement. 'Fun-nie white man!' they exclaimed at intervals.

With great pride Stepan showed me his collection of the large spoons used in drinking seal-oil and dipping up food from the community bowl — ancestral ladles made of mountain goat horns and the wood of yellow cedar. The Thlinget in his element is an æsthetic soul, and, before the white man taught him to commercialize time, he ornamented all his utensils and other belongings with paintings and embroideries and carvings. Stepan's old spoons, with their gracefully curving handles, had been carved in totemic designs and cunningly inlaid with abalone shell. Those made of horn were transparent when held to the light, and the cedar ladles, amber-hued from long usage, were soft and satiny to the touch. His greatest treasure was a famous cedar Potlatch spoon three feet long with a handle carved to represent a crouching grizzly.

Stepan pointed out the colors on one of his miniature totem poles. 'Only me use native paints now,' he said. 'Other Injun want work quick, he use white man's paints. Injun paint plenty trouble. See ——' He drew from his pocket three small pieces of what appeared to be stone, rust-red, blue-green, and black. These were the colors with which he worked. Ground in a mortar and softened with a glutinous substance obtained from rockweed, the resulting mixture was a paint both waterproof and time-defying.

'This one,' he indicated, holding out the black stone, 'this me catch-um Ketchikan — big mountain. This' — he held up the bit of red — 'he came from Yakutat cave, and *this* come Copper River country — *hiyu*

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THE LAST POTLATCH AT SITKA

Stepan is the fourth figure from the left in the bottom row. He wears the wolf-crest hat.

f-a-r country from here.' The last, a greenish copper-rock about the size of a walnut, had cost him five dollars. It was the prize color in his primitive palette, and he cupped it lovingly in his brown hand.

With new appreciation I looked at Stepan, last of the old Indian artists lingering on in a generation of half-educated Thlingets ashamed now of the old ways. In the tribe where once his was a profession of high honor, there is no need for him any more. To make his living he must carve and paint for a strange white race to whom his art is but a curiosity.

Yet with Stepan, high-caste Thlinget, idealism is not lost in commercialism. He scorns the cheap, quick ways of the white man adopted by amateurs of his kind. He still puts the best of his artist soul into everything he makes. He still gathers his pigments though it is at infinite trouble and expense in these days when distant tribes come no more to visit the Kog-wan-tans for pleasure and for trade. He grinds and mixes his paints as patiently as did his forefathers, and with the same meticulous care draws the ancient, savagely beautiful symbols. Perhaps, because of this, there clings to his colors a bit of the magic, a bit of the romance of the far places whence they came, for the soft blues, and reds, and blacks of Stepan's designs stir in me something deep, elemental, intangible, that has to do with canoes moving swiftly at sundown, and the smell of yellow cedar in the dusk.

The old man tucked his raw colors into a beaded pouch, and a moment later vanished into the back room where, for some time, I had been hearing the

whining and tentative pawings of an animal. Woman-Always-Wondering nodded at me.

'Our dog! He all time want visit with you!' she explained, chuckling with amusement as she went on weaving her basket.

4

Wondering sat, her knees drawn up level with her chest, her arms resting comfortably on them while she manipulated the ivory-colored tendrils of split spruce roots which form the body of the famous Yakutat basket. Into a tomato can filled with water she dipped her brown fingers to moisten the strands, and with every swift movement of the weft she changed the warp, which she held between her teeth. By overlaying the weft with tinted strips of straw she embroidered on her basket the design known as 'the butterfly's flight.' On each side of this appeared the 'wave of the sea' pattern, the oldest design known to Thlinget weavers. It represents a canoe rising and falling on the billows.

Forest and hill and mossy banks of streams furnish the colors that give to Wondering's baskets the rare quality sought after by collectors up and down the coast. Like Stepan, she scorns the tawdry aniline dyes of the white trader. Her old, soft yellows come from the ivory deer-moss that hangs from spruce trees when the snow is deep; her blacks from hemlock bark boiled with the clay Stepan gets for her at a sulphur spring. Her jade is an alkaline solution of copper ore. In September, 'the month of the little moon,' are gathered the frost-touched blueberries and naygoon berries

that give her purple and crimson. Ivory she produces by using split straws in their natural color. Weeks, months, and sometimes a year may be spent in the wearing of a single basket.

Yakutat baskets, made when beauty instead of commerce inspired them, are time-mellowed symphonies of color in which rich designs blend with the tawny backgrounds until they are as delightful to the eye as the age-fused harmonies of Oriental rugs. Few can resist their lure, perhaps because of an instinct surviving from the days of our savage, naked foremothers, who sat in squatting places along the rivers and plaited the first crude baskets from the reeds.

Of course, the Thlingets have their legend to account for the origin of weaving. As Wondering wove in the yellow of 'the butterfly's flight' she told me, in her quaint way, this story of the first Yakutat basket:

Long ago, when the world was very young and mortals could still communicate with spirits, the Sun looked down from his home in the clouds and saw a maiden so beautiful that he fell in love with her. When darkness came and his day's work was over he changed himself into a man and wooed her so ardently that she consented to go back to the clouds with him. There they lived in great happiness, and had many children. But the little ones were earthbound. They were forever looking over the edge of a cloud and longing to descend. Then one day, as the mother was wondering how she could make them contented, she picked up some spirit-roots and absent-mindedly plaited them together until a small basket was formed.

The Sun shone on it until it grew large enough to contain the mother and her brood. Then the kind luminary lowered them all to the earth and they landed in a wild strawberry bed near Yakutat. Wondering assured me that it was from this 'mother-basket' that the native women learned the art of weaving.

While I watched her deft brown fingers, I thought of Ella Higginson's poetic tribute: 'Indian basketry is poetry, music, art, and life itself woven exquisitely together out of dreams and sent out into the world in appealing messages which will one day be farewells when the dark women who wove them are no more.'

I asked Woman-Always-Wondering: 'Now that you are lame do the young girls gather roots for you?'

'No-o-o!' Scorn was in her voice. 'Thlinget girl no savvey basket root. No savvey basket. She all time read, write, go movie picture. She' — the little creature poked a finger at me and laughed — 'she lazy all same white 'ooman!'

I took up a basket that was fashioned with a lid. The cover had a hollow woven knob which rattled when I shook it. Tu-dar-huck, or Noise-Inside, is the name of such baskets. The noise, said Wondering, comes from tiny stones taken from the crop of a goose, and has the magic property of warding off evil spirits. Thlinget mothers make rattles in the same way and hang them on the baby-boards to which their infants are strapped. I have an Indian friend educated at Carlisle and married to a white man; yet she, too, has one of those devil-chasers attached to the dainty crib of her blue-eyed baby.

Stepan came from the other room lugging a large coarse basket, black and broken with age. 'Him made long time ago before Injun have iron-pot-kettle. Thlinget 'ooman she put water, salmon, hot rocks in basket. Cook-um grub just same stove — long time ago.'

While he spoke he thrust his hand into the old cooking utensil and from its miscellaneous contents brought forth a labret, the lip ornament worn, less than a century ago, by all high-caste women of the tribe. It was an oval piece of jade about three inches long and grooved about the middle like an immense collar button.

'Her mamma — she wear! She have hole in chin.' Stepan indicated the lower lip where Wondering's parent had worn the jade plug in an incision which, according to custom, was made with great ceremony at puberty and gradually enlarged as years passed and the wearer gained distinction. From its size, Wondering's parent must have lived to a ripe old age and been honored and loved as well; for most of the women at that time wore ivory or wooden lip ornaments. The rare jade labrets were presented by warriors only to the women they loved.

Of this queer custom all the old navigators have left us vigorous written condemnation. Vancouver shuddered at the appearance of the 'split-lipped' ladies. La Pérouse considered that the whole world could not offer another custom as revolting and disgusting. 'We sometimes persuaded them to take off this ornament,' he writes, 'which they consented to do with reluctance,

making the same modest gestures and experiencing the same embarrassment as an European lady would show at uncovering her bosom. The lower lip then fell down on the chin, and this second picture was no less hideous than the former.'

'Why did your mother wear such a thing, Wondering?' I asked.

She took the piece of jade from me and held it against her chin as she gave me the reason: 'Make-um pretty.'

'Would you like to wear one?'

She fingered the ornament longingly. 'White man — he no like,' she replied with a shake of her head.

'But it must have hurt your mother dreadfully to have her lower lip punctured.' As I shivered at the thought, Stepan suddenly put aside the kerchief on his wife's head and took the lobe of her ear in his fingers.

'All same white 'ooman have hole in ear,' he explained earnestly. 'I see missionary lady — little piece glass here — and here.' He indicated each of Wondering's ears, and then broke into his chuckling laugh.

Feeling, somehow, that the joke was on me, I joined in the laughter, and presently began to tell them how white women in the States have permanent waves put in their hair. The old couple were so interested that I went into detail about the machine with its dozens of shiny metal tubes under which one sits suspended by the hair, as it were, while the electric current is turned on to the baking point. The only object known to them with which I could compare the waver was the

octopus or devil-fish. The bulging-eyed horror and long-drawn ah-a-a-s of wonderment with which they listened, encouraged me to go further into the subject. So I touched on plastic surgery — face-lifting and double-chin removing in all its skin-slicing phases.

Wondering shuddered and groaned, covering her face with her hands. 'P-o-o-r white 'ooman!' she kept repeating.

Stepan, his brows puckering in vicarious pain, listened to the end. Then he burst out: 'What for she do?'

'Make-um pretty,' I answered.

5

I had noticed on the wall a faded photograph of a high-headed chief in a beaded dancing-shirt. He was holding the paddle-like baton used by Thlinget leaders of the dance. I asked about it.

'Me!' announced Stepan, proudly patting himself on the chest. He caught up a broom and struck the pose.

'Yes. My Stepan he boss singer, boss dancer of Kog-wan-tans!' cried little Wondering. 'L-o-n-g time ago high-caste Taku people come Sitka. Yakutat people come. Tsimp-si-ans come. B-i-g Potlatch. My Stepan, he boss all time.' She caught up a tom-tom and began striking it lightly with a padded stick.

Oom-oom . . . oom-oom . . . oom-oom!

My white blood stirred. Stepan's gray head went up.

Oom-oom . . . oom-oom . . . oom-oom!

Stepan's eyes brightened at that soft, seductive

sound, an echo out of his heathen past. He glanced furtively at the Bible on the bed, at the photographs of the missionaries who had banished Indian dancing.

Oom-oom . . . oom-oom . . . oom-oom!

Wondering, her head on one side, smiled and swayed from the waist. Then, thin and high and sweet above the boom of the drum, her voice began a chant, one of the 'woman songs' sung at a Potlatch. This proved to be too much for Stepan. He darted away. A few moments later, with a smothered whoop he sprang back into the room.

But he was not Stepan the deacon.

He was Kon-ke-dah, the great Wolf leader of the Kog-wan-tan dancers. On his head was a high crown covered with squares of abalone shell and tufted about the top with waving strands of human hair. In his nose was a carved silver ring. Across his shoulders hung a Chilcat blanket, strikingly designed in black, yellow, and blue with an edging of fog-colored fringe that swayed about his knees.

While Wondering chanted and drummed, he began sinuous, crouching steps, thrusting ahead of him with his substitute baton. He lunged forward, fell backward, postured in strange mechanical rhythm. He stamped his feet and shook his head so that the hair on his glittering headdress waved like a wild man's. He tossed his broom to the bed, where it lay unheeded across the pictured missionaries and, as the tom-tom throbbed on, he continued his intricate steps, supplementing them with expressive hands and arms. Then, with astonishing suddenness, he stopped in the

middle of a crouch, raised himself, and turned to me with a hearty laugh, in which Wondering joined.

'So I do — long time ago!' he cried. '*Every-bod-dee* have good time then. But now I am Christian. No do any more.' Under his barbaric crown Stepan's brown face began to settle again into deacon-like seriousness.

'Oh, Stepan, you *are* a great dancer!' I could not help exclaiming. 'When I was a little girl — so high — I saw Chief Yakkwan, Swimming Wolf, lead his dancers at the great Potlatch on Kayak Island. I saw him do the Grizzly Bear dance. You know Yakkwan, Stepan?'

'Ugh! Ugh!' shouted the delighted old man, casting off his seriousness. 'Me know! Me know Kayak Injun dance! Stick Injun dance — *all* dance. Me do. You watch!'

During the next hour Stepan did a dozen famous ancient ceremonial dances of the Thlingets, dances which a white man seldom sees. And while little Wondering beat her drum and chanted for him, some educated young buck in a community house near by kept up a faint saxophone rendering of a popular jazz song. Though to me there was something curiously disturbing in this, the old couple were oblivious to everything but Stepan's steps.

Between dances my host explained that in former times dancing was the most important social and ceremonial observance. When tribes came together for celebration or peace-making purposes the chief dancers of each kwan, arrayed in their best costumes, approached each other doing their finest steps. And

sometimes, said Stepan, in the effort to outdo each other, a new war was brought on! During the ceremonies every movement of the dancers was watched and their mistakes noted. So great was the strain on the performers that often, after a great feast, a dancer died. Then the tribesmen said: 'The people's looks have killed him.'

After a while Stepan ceased his dignified steps. He became a comedian who made Wondering and me laugh with the humorous dances once executed by the Kog-wan-tans when they wanted to poke a little fun at other tribes. This is the way he danced a joke on the Stick Indians:

With a slow forward movement of his neck and body he advanced inch by inch, his hands tight against his stomach which he worked vigorously up and down. He kept thrusting his face out and snapping it back with a jerk designed to scatter the eagle down which should have filled his hollow crown. He ended by sawing his hand across his throat, as though he were cutting off his own head. This delighted Wondering, who urged me to imitate him.

'This Yakutat funny dance!' announced Stepan, beginning a new one. He thrust eagle feathers under his head-band so that they slanted down over his face. Snatching a two-foot mirror off the wall he held it at arm's length prancing with ridiculous mincing steps up and down the room while he made faces at himself in the glass — faces expressive of comic disdain, rage, hate, and the tenderest love. He broke off to join in our shrieks of laughter.

'We have plenty good time to-day,' Stepan declared, when I rose to take my leave. 'You come again. You all same *shawut* Kog-wan-tan. All same Injun 'ooman.'

While I stood on the steps saying good-bye to the rare old couple, I noticed farther down the green-bordered path an immense community house high up on piles. Even in the sunshine there was a look of desolation and mystery about the unpainted place. Though the boarded door was twenty feet from the ground there was no sign of a stairway leading to it. From an oval opening near the peak of the roof the head of a huge wooden frog peered down with a kind of lecherous weirdness. The image must have measured three feet between its bulging eyes. One side of it bore the marks of an axe.

'Whose house, Stepan?' I inquired, pointing to the bleached dwelling.

The old Thlinget looked cautiously about him before he whispered: 'That Frog-House — Kakesetti People. Long time ago Injun jealous. They chop frog with axe. Twelve white mans send them jail. They live in jail two years.'

I raised my voice to ask further explanation of this mystery, but to my astonishment both Stepan and Wondering lifted warning hands and shot fearful glances about the Indian celery bushes basking in the sun. 'Shush — shush!' they whispered and put their fingers on their lips.

What happened in that long-ago time when the Kakesetti People chopped their Frog? Or did the Kog-wan-tans chop the Kakesetti Frog? Why did they

do it? What was there about the incident that the mere mention of the deed caused the old 'Christian' couple to whisper and look affrighted in broad daylight?

I sauntered along the path asking myself these questions, but I found no answer.

6

As I walked, I drifted into thinking of Stepan and Woman-Always-Wondering — faithful, devoted couple who, after so many years together, still loved each other. I contrasted Thlinget marriages with those of the civilized world, which could be counted upon to furnish at least three lurid headlines in every morning paper. With faulty Irish logic I was persuading myself that all Thlinget husbands must be just a little lower than the angels, when I became aware of a buxom squaw limping painfully along the trail toward me. With grunts and groans she halted directly in my path.

'What's wrong?' I asked in concern.

'Ugh! Ugh! Me plenty sick! My hus-bant — he heap bad man. He shoot me!'

'Good Heavens! Shoot you? Where?'

'Yes. He b-a-d man,' she repeated heavily. 'He shoot me hard.'

'The wretch! The villain! Where?' I asked, my eyes seeking earnestly for her wound.

She gave me a look of solemn misery, and turned her back. Gingerly placing her hand on the plump region below her waist-line, she groaned: 'Here. Here — he — shoot — me — wit — hees — foot.'

CHAPTER IV

I

THERE is enchantment in the daylight nights of the North; something so beautiful, so serene, so promising, that the memory of them never leaves those who have once known their spell. Sitka's supreme spectacle is the lingering sunsets of June, and as I stood on the brow of the Keekor that night, after the village had sunk into bedtime silence, I felt as if I had regained a lost and longed-for happiness.

A hermit thrush was singing through the sunset. Sea and sky were swept with clear, ethereal tints — emerald, flame, violet, and rose-gold. Mount Edgecumbe raised its pearl-toned crown against the deepened splendor of the west. The drone of drowsy waters drifted in across a fleet of little islands reflected in the bay.

Directly below me the piling of the wharf lengthened into shadows toward a cluster of fishing-boats anchored where once the trading ships of the world lay furled awaiting the pleasure of Baranov. Water-birds in a line winged their way down the shining channel and I watched their flight past the dimming headlands that jutted out into the waterway. They lost themselves against the purple of the forest which now stands on the ruins of Fort Archangel Gabriel — Baranov's first settlement at Sitka.

It was on an August day in 1799 that the valiant

little Governor, standing there with his meager band of Russians, boldly raised the standard of his Czar over that crude fort he had built in the midst of three thousand hostile Thlingets. How the echoes must have reverberated through the timber where the warriors lurked listening and watching with dark resentful eyes — the echoes of 'The Spirit of Russian Hunters,' the 'little song' he composed for the occasion:

> Let dwellings crown our new-born land.
> Russia aspires! — See Nootka stand!
> Rude tribes and Nature wild are tamed
> And friendship's blithesome sway proclaimed!
>
> Peter the Great, couldst but thou —
> Vast, prescient soul — awaken now,
> What joys were thine to view this spoil
> The first fruits of thy children's toil!
>
> To glory led, in honor reared,
> By labors with our comrades cheered,
> Wide spread we our colonial bounds
> So all to Russia's fame redounds!

Such was the brave christening of Fort Archangel Gabriel that came to my mind as I sat through that hour of light and color and shadow, which mingled like the traditions that have grown up around these shores — light of Christianity, colors of romance and daring, shadows of treachery and tragedy.

The shadows lie thickest about the three-barred cross which now marks the site of the fort, a cross rooted in ground drenched with Russian blood. I found it hard to believe that the grandfather of my friend

ALEXANDER ANDREEVITCH BARANOV
First Governor of the Russian-American Fur Colonies.

Stepan had been among that frightful horde of savages who, on a placid June evening in 1802, swept that first Sitka colony from the earth.

The attack was made on a holiday when Baranov was absent at Kodiak, and while many of his hunting parties were away. Without warning, the peace of the evening was shattered by maniacal cries. From the forest, shooting as they came, leaped half-naked Indians smeared with red and yellow paint. Their streaming hair was powdered with eagles' down. Their faces were covered with death masks which turned them into staring-eyed, gleaming-toothed nightmares. More hideous in his regalia of death than any other was the Chief Skayeutlelt, false friend of Baranov, who, from a knoll, directed the massacre.

This treacherous savage faced the sunset, and above the terrified cries of helpless women and children within the fort, his great voice roared urging his reënforcements to the slaughter. They rounded the point in full battle cry, sixty war canoes filled with additional armed, blood-avid barbarians; sixty prows that cut the water already red with blood and the light from the burning fort.

Within the smoke-filled barracks the Russian commander, Medvednikov, with twelve men, bravely attempted to repulse the sudden attack. But in vain. The barriers were quickly beaten down, the defenders slain, and the women carried off into the woods. Hunting parties of Aleuts and Russians, returning during the siege, were also murdered. The air was filled with flames and fiendish yells of triumph, while

the torture of white men and the looting of the fur-filled magazines went on. . . . That night twenty Russians and a hundred and thirty Aleuts died.

Thus in smoke and ashes and death ended the first attempt to establish a settlement at Sitka.

At Kodiak, Baranov heard of the catastrophe. Though he was somewhat hardened by his ten years' battling against frightful odds in the new world, he was inconsolable. He had traded to the Thlingets the best of his goods and the very clothes off his back for the site of Fort Archangel Gabriel. His best men had died defending it. Not even the news of his two recent decorations of nobility could comfort him. With tears in his eyes he exclaimed: 'I am a nobleman — but what of it? Sitka is destroyed. I will either die, or restore the possessions of my Emperor!'

Two years later he made good his promise to restore Sitka. Many a time, as I've watched the prow of my home-bound steamer rear and plunge over the mountainous seas in the Gulf of Alaska, I've thought of the indomitable Baranov leading his fleet of four hundred bidarkas and nine hundred men across that wild stretch of the North Pacific that lies between Kodiak and Sitka. Those tiny skin boats were tossed like corks on the roughest seas Alaska knows; they were blown like brown leaves before the fiercest gales of the North; they were harried by hostile natives along that twelve hundred miles of coastline; yet Baranov not only pushed steadily on, but *he hunted sea-otters as he came!*

Though the cruise cost him fifty bidarkas and a hundred men, on nearing his destination he rejoiced

in the greatest bit of luck that ever befell him; for he found there Captain Lisiansky of the Imperial Navy, who was carrying the Russian flag around the world in the sloop of war, Neva. The Captain had set sail from Kodiak, overtaken and passed Baranov, and now lay anchored off the Keekor awaiting the Governor's arrival. He was ready to lend his assistance in establishing the new post.

The Keekor, on that September night in 1804, was crowned by a redoubt of the Thlingets. Dark, wooded mountains brooded behind the thick blowing mists that swathed it. Inside the log walls the savages paced uneasily about, peering down through the gloom at the lights of the anchored Neva. Well they knew that Baranov, the little white chief, had come to exact a reckoning for the Russian blood they had spilled and the Russian fort they had razed. And because their own code was a life for a life, they feared the reckoning would be a bloody one.

All night long their shamans danced naked about the witch-fires, invoking warrior spirits in chants that drifted out on the wet autumn night to the ears of Baranov and Lisiansky in consultation on the sloop of war. But so great was the Thlingets' fear of the Iron Governor that before morning they stole away from their fort on the Keekor, withdrawing to a stronger fortification at the mouth of Indian River, where today winds Sitka's Lover's Lane.

Here they prepared for a siege.

Though this second stronghold was but a mile away, Baranov, scorning the danger, landed his men

and ascended the Keekor. While his Aleuts stood crossing themselves during the ceremonies, he again raised the standard of the double-headed eagle and took possession of the soil in the name of Russia. He planted his stubby little cannon to encircle the edge of the Keekor; and with a remembering look down the channel toward the ruins of Fort Archangel Gabriel, he named the new settlement Novo Arkangelsk — New Archangel.

However, siege, battle, and death took its toll from both white men and red before the site of New Archangel — now Sitka — finally passed into Baranov's possession. But once he had secured it, he boldly moved his headquarters from the safety of Kodiak Island, established his capital in the midst of his enemies, and made Sitka mistress of the west coast of North America.

2

The stir and color of those sea-otter hunting days are gone, and the tides of more than a hundred years have ebbed and flowed above the watery grave of Alexander Andreevitch Baranov, who dominated them; yet so picturesque was his sway, so vigorous his personality, that the memory of him, more potent than a living presence, permeates the sleepy old Sitka of to-day.

This strange and peerless commander, the greatest pioneer Alaska has ever known, was in truth both 'a candle to God, and a poker to the Devil.' He was a Napoleon of the wilderness who colored the pages of Alaska's history with such deeds of unflinching courage, such victories over apparently insuperable obsta-

cles, such triumphs of boldness and strategy, that they read like a fascinating epic.

With his own sword he defended himself against his personal enemies. If he used the knout on law-breakers, it must be remembered that the whipping-post was at that time in vogue in New England. He could labor with hammer and saw to build a shed for his cow, yet he himself was waited upon hand and foot by his turbaned East Indian servant. He had a passion for music and a love of reading, but he had also a genius for barter and trade that has never since been equaled. Master of wassail and song, Baranov could drink under the table any captain of the Seven Seas who visited him, yet he never permitted his beautiful half-breed daughter to see him under the influence of liquor.

'No wilder lord of the wild northland ever existed than that old madcap viking of the Pacific,' A. C. Laut writes of him in 'Vikings of the Pacific.' '. . . Whether leading the hunting brigades of a thousand men over the sea in skin canoes light as a cork, or rallying his followers ambushed by hostiles repelling invasion of their hunting grounds, or drowning hardships in seas of fiery Russian brandy in midnight carousals, Baranov was supreme autocrat. Drunk or sober, he was master of whatever came, mutineers or foreign traders planning to oust the Russians from the coast of America.'

History brings Baranov on the Alaskan stage a flaxen-haired, slender little man, forty years old, with an ingenuous expression of countenance which neither age nor hardship ever effaced. His eyes sparkled with

life and energy, and his wiry frame possessed a muscular strength and endurance exceeding that of any of his followers.

He set sail for Russian America in 1790 to save the infant Russian American Fur Company, then precariously established at Three Saints Bay, Kodiak Island, from the annihilation threatened by rival fur companies composed of *promyshileniki*, who had previously come to plunder furs on the Northwest coast. But his ship, loaded with badly needed supplies for his hungry colony, was wrecked on a barren Aleutian island, and in the wintertime. As soon as the weather permitted, Baranov gathered up the wreckage, combined it with skins of sea-lions he killed, and made a small craft in which he proceeded to his destination.

He landed at Three Saints during the summer of 1791, and found for his empire-building a wilderness thousands of miles from a base of supplies, and five rival fur colonies composed for the most part of convicts whom the first traders had recruited under promise of rich booty and licentious living. Though these, with his own company, were famine stricken and threatened continually with extinction by hostile savages, they were also carrying on a bitter warfare among themselves.

Before Baranov's time the *promyshileniki* had committed fearful outrages against the Aleuts — outrages which ill-informed chroniclers later laid at the Iron Governor's door. This broth of robbers, felons, and exiles found in Baranov a common enemy. They im-

mediately united in making him the victim of their intrigues, slanders, jealousy, and treachery.

'We fear neither God, law, nor devil!' they boasted to him, when he landed.

'I,' answered the quiet, level-eyed Baranov, 'combine that trinity in myself.' And single-handed he proceeded to put the fear of all three, not only into his rivals, but also into his subordinates, who thoughtfully selected this time to mutiny against him.

Complicating his task, however, came a shipload of priests and monks, sent over from Siberia by the pious Russian American Fur Company to 'explain hell to the savages.' These emissaries of peace and good will arrived during the busiest season of the year, when Baranov, who had been obliged to move his headquarters to the present site of Kodiak on the Harbor of St. Paul, was desperately putting up fish and working against time to erect shelters for his men before the icy blizzards of winter came on.

Those who know the winter weather of the Alaskan Peninsula will appreciate why he could not cease this vital work and immediately devote himself to the needs of the Church and its representatives. But the missionaries, not understanding his problem, took umbrage. They opposed him at every turn, refused to see any good in his activities and, instead of spreading the gospel of brotherly love among the quarreling fur dépôts, they increased the dissatisfaction even at the most distant stations.

They had brought no food with them from Siberia, having lived too well while waiting there to embark

for America, yet they complained bitterly of the fare provided — food which Baranov himself was eating. With predictions of wars and famine, the missionaries sought to keep the hunters from hunting, though the fur acquired by those men was the very life blood of their infant colonies.

With everything and every one against him, Baranov, nevertheless, went steadily on with his work, and even managed to extract a little fun from the situation, if we may judge from the diary kept by young Father Juvenal, one of the opposing priests.

Amid these uncongenial surroundings the Russian ecclesiastics, of course, managed to maintain the glitter and pomp of their Church. Therefore, in order to stamp the doughty little Baranov as one vile and ungodly in the eyes of the men he governed, the priests attempted to prevent his walking behind the cross in their religious processions. One can imagine the success they had!

Father Juvenal writes thus of a service held: 'We had fine singing and a congregation with great appearance of devotion. I could not help but marvel at Alexander Andreevitch, who stood there and listened and crossed himself, gave responses at the proper time, and joined in the singing with the same hoarse voice with which he was shouting obscene songs the night before when I saw him in the midst of a drunken carousal with a woman seated on his lap.'

Father Juvenal, having just been called from a post where he had already established a school for the natives, was not pleased. He sought Baranov to re-

monstrate with him, and found him sitting before his tent while his servant prepared tea.

'He did not ask me to be seated or to partake of the tea, though it was nearly a year since I had tasted any,' writes the priest. 'I told him of my anxiety about the boys of my school, and he said that at a station farther north another missionary . . . had already . . . opened a school for girls and he would doubtless be willing to take my boys also.

'This announcement he followed up by some obscene jokes which put him into such a good humor that he finally offered me some tea. I felt I ought to refuse under the circumstances, but my longing for the beverage was too strong — I degraded myself before God and man for the sake of a drink of tea. Refreshed, but ashamed of myself, I left the wicked man to pray, in my humble retreat, for strength and pride in the sanctity of my calling.'

Again, on a journey, Father Juvenal ends a long complaint of Baranov with: 'Upon request of the sailors I pronounced a blessing upon the ship when we weighed anchor, and we are now running with a fair wind which whistles through the cordage, while from the cabin ribald songs can be heard with which the Chief Manager's retainers amuse him.'

When the ship got lost in a fog with a heavy sea running, the seasick priest managed to put down: 'Mr. Baranov, in his coarsest manner, alluded publicly to me as another prophet Jonah, and added that there were plenty of whales about.'

Poor young Father Juvenal! Apparently without a

sense of humor himself, he was continually being outraged by Baranov's sardonic and none too delicate wit. But one suspects that it was the very conscious piety of this earnest missionary that inspired the rugged little Governor to heights of ribaldry.

Baranov certainly was no saint, yet Russian archives are full of instances of his firm belief in the Almighty. Though he undoubtedly took a grim delight in shocking the clergy, as soon as he had provided for the physical needs of the people depending on him, missionaries included, he set his men to erecting a church. As long as he lived he contributed generously to the cause of religion. And on many a stormy night when a ship was expected from Siberia the little man paced the beaches alone, praying for its safety.

There was need to pray. In these days when airplanes can take off from one of the Aleutian Islands and make Asia in a few hours, the isolation of the Russian colonies can hardly be imagined. Every pound of Baranov's provisions and firearms came from St. Petersburg, seven thousand miles by caravan to Kamchatka on the Pacific coast, and fifteen hundred miles farther across Bering's shallow, reef-sown sea. It was a rare thing then for Russian ships to arrive in good order and with a full cargo and crew.

Baranov's biographer, Khlebnikov, writes of that time:

> The non-arrival of vessels would sometimes leave him [Baranov] without provisions and with a large number of men to provide for. Everybody looked to him as Governor General. There were two classes to be provided for — the

Russians and the natives. The latter never troubled themselves about the future so long as they had fish to eat, but the good heart of Baranov looked into the future for them.... He did not sleep nights when the wind was blowing, thinking of the ship on the way to him laden with what he needed so much.... And how great was his courage and how strong his will when the sad news of some disaster came suddenly upon him; for instance, the destruction of a post or the loss by wreck of valuable cargoes on the safe arrival of which he had depended for a favorable showing in his settlements. Every succeeding disaster found him better prepared to meet it, and Baranov was never at his wit's end or faint hearted.... His only exclamation under a budget of bad tidings was: 'My God, how can we repair all these disasters?'

Surrounded by spies and would-be assassins during those first years he could trust no one. His letters written from Kodiak are filled with a great loneliness. He was very fond of children and had left in Russia his family which he never saw again.

Concerning his domestic affairs in the new land, he mentions acquiring a trustworthy housekeeper who could sew — a native, since there was not a white woman in all of Alaska then. 'As a general rule,' he writes, 'I do not approve of such arrangements, and think they are very dangerous to human weakness. This was the only time any of the tribes gave me a girl to keep in place of a hostage, and I shall not be persuaded to accept another.'

A letter written several years later reads: 'Owing to my sinful weakness I have here [Kodiak] a three-year-old son who is very pleasing and affectionate, but during my absence the mother neglected him and

nearly caused his death, being told by the priests that a child of sin required no tender care, but ought to be punished as well as its parents. . . . I had to take him away from her, young as he was, to save his life.'

Baranov, in the parlance of the North, was essentially a 'square shooter.' When he gave feasts in his rejoicing for good fortune, he never dreamed of putting their cost on his expense account. He paid for them out of his own pocket. He also divided his salary with his assistants, Banner and Kuskov, who were not well paid by the Russian Government. And when the first man sent out from St. Petersburg to relieve him died on the way, Baranov sent large remittances from his own funds to the bereaved family in Russia.

He was most generous in his gifts to friends. 'This is personal property and a present from me to you,' he writes to Emilian Grigarievitch Larianov, agent at Unalaska, as he sends him two bales of red foxes, three bales of cross foxes, and one and a half bales of the best quality silver fox — a princely gift. 'I only wish I had something better to give you as a token of my friendship and respect, but this is all I have drawn in the shape of salary. I suppose my people here will forge calumnies out of this.'

One of the Governor's most active enemies was the agent Polomoynov. Yet, after the man was drowned at the sinking of the ship Orel and the box containing all his private writings and papers was sent to Baranov, the little Governor wrote: 'As I knew he had been an enemy to me and had sent to Russia many false state-

ments regarding me, I did not open the box, to prevent my temper from being aroused against a man who lies dead on the bottom of the sea and will be judged by One above us.'

Literally, he justified the old saying, 'giving the clothes off his back,' for in the same letter to his friend Larianov he mentions taking all his wearing apparel to Sitka. 'And when it became necessary to make some presents to the chief for the cession of the necessary land, there was nothing belonging to the Company fit for the purpose and I had to take recourse to my wardrobe, so that I have at present neither coat nor cloak left. . . . If you have any cloth please send me about eight arshines.'

Savage and gentle by turns, Baranov was at all times paternal in his despotism. He outwitted and outbluffed his robber crews on every count, gradually forcing them to fair treatment of the natives under them. We find him disarming a scoundrel who tried to stab him, and strangling the man to death with his small, powerful hands. We find him reasoning with his dissenting hunters, impressing them, in speeches of remarkable force, with the desperate need for unity. We find him awakening in them a love and a loyalty for the very Government that had made them exiles. In the end he won them so completely that they were ready to follow him into the very maw of death.

Perhaps one of the most thrilling examples of their allegiance to him was when Baranov led twenty-two of his men into a village of three hundred armed Thlinget warriors who were about to attack his near-by fort.

He went to demand an apology for insults offered his interpreters!

His courage and arrogance were so superb that the savages not only apologized, but for the time being refrained from attacking the new settlement.

3

Convicts, missionaries, and savages were not the only obstacles with which the little commander had to reckon. The whole west coast of America was alive with ships from Spain, England, Canton, Bengal, and Austria, all bent on acquiring the fur of the Northwest. They were loaded to the scuppers with trade goods far superior to any Baranov could afford, and they were manned by men whose code was the code of the wolf.

The writings of some of those traders who feasted with Baranov and drank themselves into oblivion at his table are in no small way responsible for the Russian's reputation as a drunken sot and a cruel tyrant, an unfairness which has been handed down through the decades by other scribes more concerned with the Iron Governor's capacity for liquor than with his achievements. Nevertheless, they were, without exception, a brave and adventurous lot — those who traded in that day when trading demanded far more than a commercial mind. One must admire their courage, especially those who bartered with the bloodthirsty Thlingets of southeastern Alaska.

Let the tourist of to-day, strolling off his comfortable steamer to patronize the placid squaws displaying their wares along the Sitka dock, look back to the business

preparations of one of those Yankee skippers who traded with the ancestors of those ladies over a century and a quarter ago:

'He prepared his ship with regard for all possibilities. Around it as a bulwark he stretched a barrier of dry bull hides from the California coast. At the stern was a place prepared for trading. Forward in the deck were placed cannon, shotted with grapnel, trained so as to rake the afterdeck, and beside each was a gunner's match,' Bancroft informs us.

In their great painted canoes laden with furs came the natives arrayed for the market day. 'A more hideous set of beings in the form of men and women,' says this Yankee captain, 'I have never before seen. . . . Some groups looked really as if they had escaped from the dominions of Satan himself. One had a perpendicular line dividing the two sides of the face, one side painted red, the other black, with hair dabbed with grease and red ochre and filled with the down of birds. Another had the face divided into checkers. Most of them had little mirrors, before the acquisition of which they must have been dependent on each other for those correct touches of the pencil which are so much in vogue and which daily require more time than the toilet of a Parisian belle.'

That was the day of the wooden nutmeg and other spurious articles of commerce, and there was much sharp practice on both sides — sometimes the native getting the better of a bargain, sometimes the trader. Enshrined in history is the complaint of one savage who bought a gun from an English captain. Before

the trader's ship was hull down, the enraged red man broke the gun over his knee, shouting that it would 'only go *crick*, but never *poo-hoo!*'

Cannon and powder, firearms and liquor, of course, were all forbidden articles of trade with the natives, but those wily sea-merchants who completed their bartering and sailed away were little concerned with what happened after they had gone out of range of the guns they sold. 'We are traders,' they told Baranov, in answer to his protests, 'and we sell what we can sell and get in exchange what we can get.' This was why the astute little Governor, to preserve Russia's supremacy in her newly colonized land, moved his headquarters from the safety of Kodiak, over a thousand miles southeast to the perilous district of Sitka.

One can imagine, then, the astonishment, the uneasiness of rival traders when, in 1799, they found the Russian with his fistful of men calmly erecting Fort Archangel Gabriel under the noses of three thousand barbarous Thlingets. The Indians, though eager for the goods of the white men, were using every subterfuge they could devise to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. They even went so far as to train warriors disguised in bearskins, to shamble realistically along the beaches, to lure the crews of anchored vessels ashore within range of the ambushed savages' rifles.

But Baranov held his own, and soon after the establishment of the present Sitka, the elegant courtier and Chamberlain of the Czar, Count Nicolai Rezanov, was sent there to investigate conditions. He wrote back to St. Petersburg:

The Kolosh [Thlingets] appear to be subdued, but for how long? . . . The fierceness and treachery once exhibited by the natives have taught us all the greatest caution. Our cannon are always loaded, and not only are sentries with loaded guns posted everywhere, but arms of all kinds are the chief furniture of our rooms. Every evening after sundown, signals are maintained throughout the night, and a watchword is passed from post to post until daylight. . . . We are ready at any moment to receive the savages, who are in the habit of profiting by the darkness and the gloom of night to make their attacks.

Regarding Baranov, and the many accusations sent to Russia against him, Count Rezanov reported:

I found Baranov settling down permanently, putting up buildings of mast logs on strong foundations. We live roughly here, but more uncomfortable than any of us lives the man who has control of the place. In some leaky hut full of smoke he will rest from his labors caused by the desire to make all under his command comfortable . . . in a miserable hut open to the elements, where mould has to be wiped off every day, and which is like a sieve during the strong rain falling here. . . . Wonderful man! He is in such constant anxiety for the comfort and well-being of others that he has no time to think of himself. I asked him once if his just arrived cow had not suffered during a terrible storm which raged that night. 'No,' he said cheerfully, 'I took her into the house with me.' And he went on working on a shed for the animal. In Baranov, Governor of these possessions, I found an example of energy and perseverance combined with honesty such as is seldom met with in this world.

But once Alexander Andreevitch Baranov had safely established headquarters at Sitka, he surrounded himself with all the pomp and luxury befitting a Governor

of such a northern empire. For his officers he built huge two-story houses of squared logs — some of which remain to-day. They were warmed by *golandkas*, the Russian brick furnace. The walls were papered, the floors polished, and every room made comfortable with rich rugs and furniture from Russia. Baranov's own log castle, on the hill called the Keekor, is described by Captain Golovin, of the sloop of war Diana, as he found it six years after the founding of Sitka:

> The furniture and finishing were of the finest workmanship and very costly, having been brought from St. Petersburg and England. But what astonished me most was the large library (2600 volumes) in nearly all the European languages, and the collection of fine paintings — this in a country where probably only Baranov can appreciate a picture, and no travelers are apt to call except skippers of American trading vessels.

One of those paintings was a full-length, life-size portrait of Peter the Great. When the Americans took possession of Alaska, a faithful Russian retainer of the incumbent Governor, Prince Maksoutov, cut the picture from its heavy frame and hid it so well that only within the last decade did it come to light. To-day any one may see it hanging in the wide reception room of the Governor's House at Juneau. Swarthy, arrogant, splendidly Russian in his trappings of royalty, the monarch looks down on the restrained entertainments of our Governors of to-day.

Hospitality was far different in the days when the painted Peter presided over Baranov's banquet hall, where rafters shook to the roar of wassail and of song

led by the Iron Governor's trained musicians. Those were the days when Robert Fulton was operating his Clermont on the Hudson; John Jacob Astor was founding the fortunes of his family in the fur trade; and young Washington Irving was just beginning to be known in the world of literature. In his 'Astoria,' Irving calls Count Baranov a 'rough, rugged, hospitable, hard-working old Russian, . . . a boon companion of the old roistering school, with a strong cross of the brave.'

Irving also records the visit of Hunt, the agent of Astor, who went to do business with the Russian Governor and found him in his fort cresting the Keekor. 'He is continually giving entertainments by way of parade,' says Mr. Hunt, 'and if you do not drink raw rum and boiling punch strong as sulphur, he will insult you as soon as he gets drunk, which is very shortly after sitting down to the table.'

So much for Mr. Hunt, who, history tells it, was unable to get the better of Baranov in a trade. But Fleet Lieutenant Gavril Ivanovitch Davidov, who lived eighteen months in the castle with the Iron Governor, praises him enthusiastically. 'Baranov does not talk much unless advocating some of his favorite plans,' he writes. 'Then he becomes eloquent and carries his listeners away with him. He likes to entertain hospitably such foreigners as he can understand, and he knows how to draw from them every particle of information which might be of use to him in the execution of his plans.'

It was thus that Baranov, the little Czar, in isolated

Sitka spun his web of commerce that reached to China, Russia, Japan, Chili, Hawaii, and California. Some idea of his achievement may be gained from the fact that none of his successors, though they were drawn from a long line of nobles and high officials in the Russian navy, were great enough to carry on the work he had established on a firm foundation.

Baranov's friends have never denied that he indulged too freely in strong drink; but drinking in those days, especially in Russia, was a vice far more common than now. Hospitality, too, came near to being a vice among the Russians. I have a very old enameled cigarette case, a relic of the Russian occupation of Alaska. On the cover, done in color, is a picture representing a guest stuffed not only to repletion, but to agony, if one may judge from the expression on his face. One of his hands is held against his throat in such a way that it unmistakably indicates the high-tide mark of his feasting. The other frantically tries to shake off the grip of his determined host and hostess, who are attempting to drag him back to the table to partake further of the viands!

4

Many times during Baranov's long and faithful service he wrote back to Russia begging to be relieved. His pleas were in vain. It was not until he was in his seventy-second year, sick and tortured by inflammatory rheumatism, that his Government, with proverbial cruelty and lack of gratitude, suddenly deposed him without honor. In the fall of 1817, Lieutenant

Hagemeister arrived at Sitka. He spent one whole year spying about and stealthily investigating Baranov's records, before he announced that he was the Governor's successor.

Baranov, heartbroken at being thus cast adrift in his old age as an unfaithful steward, nevertheless rose from his sick bed, and, by plying himself with stimulants, managed to arrange the affairs of his office and transfer them to Hagemeister.

His books, covering a period of nearly thirty years, balanced to a penny, and it was found that for all he had handled annually millions of dollars' worth of furs, he had not misused or misappropriated a cent's worth of property. He had every opportunity for enriching himself — as some of his successors did; yet when he was removed he was a poor man and dependent on his Government for support during the years that were left him. He had given the best years of his life, the best of his strength, the best of his brain to his company. He had dreamed great dreams of dominion for Russia, and had made them come true, but when the hour of his farewell drew near he found that his only reward came from the wild and beautiful land he had conquered.

'He could not part from all his fellow officials, servants, and employees without sorrow,' writes his biographer. 'The old men respected him for his great qualities and his splendid deeds of which they had been witnesses, and the children had love of him instilled into their minds from birth. Many of the latter had been born around him, and had always considered him

as a father and had listened eagerly to his teachings. It was hard to say good-bye to him forever. Even the Koloshi [Thlingets] felt his approaching departure and all of them who were in reach of the fort came to take leave.'

Baranov didn't want to go away from Alaska, the land he had grown to love. He had planned to build for himself a house and end his days in comfort at the place where the Sitka Hot Springs Hotel stands to-day. But he was persuaded that his service would be valuable to the company if he went back to Russia. For that reason the indomitable old fellow, loyal to the last, embarked on a hazardous voyage around the world to offer himself once more to his country.

But I do not want to think of him as he stood on the deck of that ship weeping, while Sitka, the village of his heart, faded from his view forever. I do not want to think of him when, homesick and alone on that voyage, he died at sea, and was buried in the waters of the Indian Ocean. Rather would I dwell on the dramatic pathos of his farewell to Alaska — the superb gesture with which he hid his breaking old heart from those who had wronged him.

He was the undaunted, rugged King of Hospitality to the end. In his castle on the Keekor he gave a last banquet to the officers he loved and to his crafty successor — a splendid banquet that drained his meager purse to the bottom.

One of the men present tells how the little Iron Governor's minstrels came in during the feast, and with love of their master misting their eyes, sang all

the old songs dear to Baranov. Through those sagas, born of twenty-eight years' wild adventuring and conquering on Alaska's shores, ran the boom and malice of winter seas with Russian ships driving blindly along the foggy coast; sorrow for Russian forts asmoulder over Russian dead; contentment of hunting brigades low in their snug bidarkas watching the stars dip and rise on the crest of waves ahead; victory for the winning of a mighty empire in the North.

At the end of the banquet Baranov called for his own song, 'The Spirit of Russian Hunters,' which he had written and chanted with his followers when he raised the imperial yellow and black on the first site of Sitka. According to his custom of twenty years, he rose at the head of his long table, threw back his old shoulders, and led the singing:

> All powerful God has lent his grace,
> Russia's high hardihood to brace!
> Scarce glimpsed, as yet, this spacious coast,
> Anon a sturdy folk shall boast.
>
> Should any mourn his plight forlorn,
> Laugh we such narrow cares to scorn!
> For Russia's weal, 'tis well to dwell
> 'Mid regions stern, 'mid tribesmen fell.
>
> A dauntless, hardy troop we stand
> 'Neath midnight sun, on unworn land,
> In friendship firm, dire in the fray,
> Lift up your hearts — 'Russia for aye!'

It is thus that I would think of Baranov, the great pioneer, shouting 'Russia for aye!' in the very hour his

country had deposed him. Baranov, the little Iron Governor, standing unbowed, indomitable, inspiring loyalty in those comrades he was leaving, by proclaiming, for the last time, their common deeds of valor in their beloved wild land of the midnight sun!

CHAPTER V

I

TAKING advantage of a rainy morning I was bringing my diary up to date when Mrs. Taylor brought me a copy of the 'Sitka Weekly Times,' remarking that I would want, no doubt, to keep up with the topics of the day.

The fact that the 'Times' was several days old in no way detracted from my interest in the news that the Governor was expected from the capital in the near but indefinite future; that fox-pirates recently seen in the act of raiding a fur farm near by had eluded the owner, who had pursued them in his launch; that the fishing season was the best in years, and the salmon fleet was coming in to the canneries loaded to full capacity; that an Indian had been clawed by a brown bear until he died, and his family being destitute, was seeking the aid of the town.

With this last brief story was editorial comment anent one of the laws made for Alaskan pioneers by 'pavement solons' back in Washington, D.C. 'The brown bear is the Apache of the bear tribe and a menace to the lives of persons roaming the woods and hills of Alaska,' wrote the Sitka editor. 'He kills cattle and sheep at every opportunity. Yet he is protected by law. In vain have Alaskans appealed for his destruction. When an attempt was made to have Congress repeal the law protecting brown bears, such

a cry arose from Eastern sportsmen that the matter was dropped. But the black bear, which is small, harmless, and easily tamed on account of its affectionate disposition, is not protected.' Having listened nearly all my life to Alaskan discussions of this ironic and apparently hopeless situation, I turned the page to find something more cheerful.

It was there, flanked by the professional cards of the attorney and the dentist — the advertisement of Sitka's plumber. In his superb disregard of time and the frailty of pipe systems he quite outdid his brother mechanics of the States, for here in June he was blithely informing the village housewives:

I AM OUT FISHING!

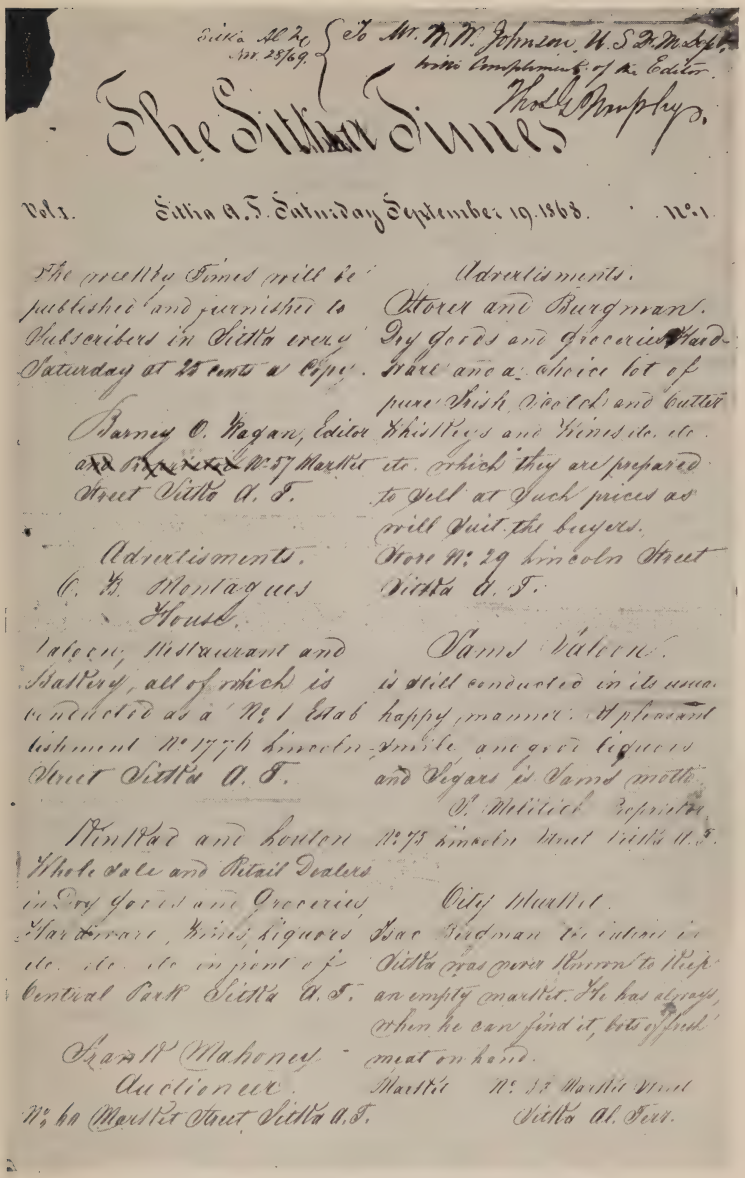
Will be back in September
With pre-war prices for plumbing and heating.

GEORGE B. DUNN.

The friendly appeal of this announcement was irresistible. I felt that if I ever acquired a house in Sitka no one but George should do my plumbing — even if I did have to wait three months! I was glad, too, that he was having a good time out fishing — a man like George would — and there was a positive touch of romance in the thought of his return in September, tanned, healthy, with pre-war prices for plumbing!

2

The naïve intimacy of the advertisement brought to my mind the first newspaper published in American Alaska, a photostat copy of which I treasure. This,



Sitka Al 20 Nov 25/69.

To Mr. W. W. Johnson, U.S.D. Marshal, with compliments of the Editor. Thos. L. Amphlett.

The Sitka Times

Vol. 1. Sitka A.T. Saturday September 19. 1868. No. 1

The weekly Times will be published and furnished to Subscribers in Sitka every Saturday at 25 cents a Copy.

Barney C. Hagan, Editor and Proprietor No. 57 Marble Street Sitka A. T.

Advertisements.

C. H. Montagues House.

Saloon, Restaurant and Bakery, all of which is conducted as a No. 1 Establishment No. 179 Lincoln Street Sitka A. T.

Kimball and Bolton Whole sale and Retail Dealers in Dry Goods and Groceries Hardware, Wines, Liquors etc. etc. etc. in front of Central Park Sitka A. T.

Frank Mahoney Auctioneer No. 60 Marble Street Sitka A.T.

Advertisements.

Stover and Burgman. Dry Goods and Groceries Hardware and a choice lot of pure Irish Alcohol and Butter Whiskeys and Wines etc. etc. etc. which they are prepared to sell at such prices as will suit the buyers. Store No. 29 Lincoln Street Sitka A. T.

Sams Saloon. is still conducted in its usual happy manner. A pleasant smile and good liquors and Segars is Sams motto. J. Mulford Proprietor No. 75 Lincoln Street Sitka A. T.

City Market. Isac Bridman Esq. Indian is Sitka was given Notice to Wipe an empty marble. He has always when he can find it, lots of fresh meat on hand. Market No. 58 Marble Street Sitka Al. Ter.

THE FIRST NUMBER OF THE SITKA TIMES

Though liquor-selling was illegal in Alaska at this time, wines and liquors were freely advertised.

also called the 'Sitka Times,' is dated September 19, 1868, the year after the purchase of Alaska. It consists of four yellowed sheets of ruled legal cap on which the news is written in beautiful long-hand inside columns marked off in red ink. At twenty-five cents a copy it was furnished to subscribers every Saturday by its editor, one Barney O'Ragan, who, despite the Hibernian flavor of his name, set forth the policy of his paper thus: 'In politics and religion we are neutral.'

He goes on: 'As our local items will be few, we shall spare no pains in giving well-defined descriptions of all fights, record in the language of flowers the matrimonial pursuits of mankind, with respectful details of those whose souls have fled to spirit land.'

In those days Sitka was under military rule. It was a time of unbridled lawlessness both for citizens and soldiers. Notwithstanding the diplomatic policy of the 'Times,' its Irish editor evidently found it impossible to remain neutral, for he records, in language that is anything but that of the flowers, how he incurred the displeasure of an army officer who later called upon him. 'He' — so reads Mr. O'Ragan's beautiful script — 'he was just about to be guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, by dealing out corporeal punishment to us, a common citizen, when in stepped another officer and stopped the fracas. So we escaped without a punch in the mug, a tap on our bread-basket, or a bloody snout.'

In the 'Times' of 1868 crime is given space under a modest headline:

BURGLARY

A bold attempt was made last Thursday evening to enter the warehouse of the Russian American Company where the principal valuable furs are kept. The party succeeded in breaking a window prying one of the iron bars, and in trying to enter was only successful in getting his head in when he lost his cap. It was marked with the letter H and it was handed to General Jefferson Davis the next morning. Whoever he is is very likely to be found out.

The shipping news contains an item that brings back the time of the exodus of the Russians after their country had been sold from under them. They were given the choice of either becoming citizens of the United States and remaining in Sitka or of leaving their homes and going back to make new places for themselves in the Russia most of them had forgotten and many of them had never seen.

There are no details regarding the tearful departure of the Russians, or the grief of those who, because they were unable to make the long and expensive journey, were left behind to dwell among strange people under a new flag. But a theme kindred to that of 'Evangeline' lies in the following small paragraph:

To sail: The Winged Arrow will leave for Russia in about two weeks. She will take 186 persons including men, women and children. These people are the last of the Russians who will leave for Russia. From what we can learn about 300 or 400 of the Russians will remain at Sitka.

The greater part of Barney O'Ragan's paper is devoted to advertisements. Dry-goods stores, bakeries, and grocery stores are all represented. In addition to

the regular merchandise each one of these establishments headlined 'a fine line of liquors and cigars.' The butcher is the exception. He, adventurous fellow, bought all his fresh meat from the Thlingets, meeting them at the gate of the stockade which then protected Sitka from the Indian village. If the savages were sulky or preparing to go on the warpath against the whites, they would sell him no meat. Thus it is with reservations that he challenges the attention of the housewives:

Isaac Bergmen, the butcher in Sitka, was never known to keep an empty market. He has always — when he can find it — lots of fresh meat on hand. Market at No. 38 Market St.

History tells us that in 1868 no liquor was allowed in Alaska, except that sent to the Department headquarters subject to the disposal of the military commander. The 'Times,' however, fairly bristles with saloon advertisements. Here is one of them, conspicuous in a neat border of red ink.

SAM'S SALOON

Is still conducted in its usual happy manner.
A pleasant smile and good liquors and Segars is
Sam's motto.
S. Meltitch Prop.
No. 75 Lincoln St. Sitka A.T.

The last item in the old paper reads:

Lumber! Lumber! Always at hand at the American Russian Company's sawmill at the usual market rates.

3

Those lines bring me back to the Sitka of the present, for, from my room at the Erler, I could look out across the road to where, above the elderberries, loomed the brown roof of that mill. The first timber that fed its saws was felled under guard of armed Russian soldiers who kept the Indians at a distance while the woodsmen worked. The Russian hands that first set its wheels in motion have been still a hundred years, yet every one to-day calls it the old Russian Mill.

Nailed to a hand-hewn beam in the dim interior is a bronze plate, all that remains of a planer, the first piece of American machinery brought to Alaska. Engraved on it are the words: 'Woodworth's Patent; December 27, 1828. Made by S. B. Schenk, Mansfield, Mass.'

Sailors have told me that in Macao and in Canton there are standing buildings of Alaskan spruce finished on that machine which performed its work well for nearly a century before it was supplanted by a modern planer.

The old Russian Mill is one of the many things that link early Alaskan history with that of California. Because of it Baron von Wrangell, Governor of Russian America from 1830 to 1835, formed the acquaintance of the Swiss adventurer John Sutter, who later bought the Russian colony of Fort Ross in California.

When the United States purchased Alaska, an American company of San Francisco took over the Russian Mill. Set forth in a yellowing document, loaned me by the present owner, are these instructions written by

the first shrewd Yankee proprietor to the agent he left in charge:

You will run the mill so long as it shows a cash profit. As I am leaving I know that the main belt is old, but it will not be necessary to buy a new one as a little judicious patching will suffice. The present output of the mill should be 3000 feet per day.

Startsfuff, the sawyer, you will find is an excellent man. Keep him in the employ of the mill even if it be necessary to pay him more wages. His wages are now one dollar and seventy-five cents a day; other hands a dollar a day. You will pay no more than three dollars per thousand for logs.

If Lear wants lumber to build a wharf, sell it to him for fifteen dollars a thousand. The usual rates for lumber are twenty dollars a thousand all round. Should the Government or the Greek-Russian Church require a bill, charge them thirty dollars, as I have already told them so. Besides this they can stand it. You need not speak of this difference to any one.

Since that shifting scale of prices was in use, the mill has known many changes. The old moss-grown dripping flume that used to cross the road conveying water to the big wheel is gone now, as is the wheel. The mill itself has been repaired and gradually modernized until few of its original timbers remain.

Yet, as I sat that morning looking out at the wet brown roof, I felt keenly the romance of those bygone days. Perhaps it was because directly outside the Erler's fence stood the huge community grindstone which the Russians used in 1830. And across the street was an old-fashioned muzzle-loader. The imperial eagle of the Czars adorned one side of the cannon,

with the date of casting — 1723. Below it were the words: '*Baranov's Puska.*'

While I looked, a tiny Thlinget boy came running ahead of his mother and several other squaws. He straddled the cannon as if it had been a hobby-horse. The Indian women laughed softly and chuckled, calling to him as they passed: '*Ah cgoo!* Dimitri! Come here!' He wiped the rain from his face, slid to the ground, and toddled after them.

The rain fell in a gentle, hushed manner that in no way obscured the view of the bay and far wooded hills. Gray gulls on easy wings floated by my open window, and against my face drifted the fragrance of wet lilac buds unfolding. Diffused light touched everything with a magical silver quality. The quiet water was silver, as were the clouds reaching fingers of mist into lilac-toned hollows of the mountains. Rocky, spruce-crested islets tangled silver vapor in their tree-tops. The green that bordered the roadway was beaded with it. Faintly from a distant room came the glissading notes of a piano, charming, melancholy, like silver raindrops running down a blade of grass.

Below me, along the roadway — the Russian Promenade that curves to the Wishing Stone — Sitka was passing: Old Daniel Hire, hobbling on his way to Lover's Lane; a bearded priest, tagged by a boy carrying a shaggy pup; the white-haired Episcopal clergyman, arm in arm with his smiling white-haired wife; and Merrill, the Father of Pictures, his head bare, his serene face lifted to the rain.

On the opposite bank of the mill-stream was pitched

a small tent open on three sides. Under it a chubby, year-old baby gurgled over the top of his kiddy-coop, hailing each passer-by with flourishes of his rattle. Every day of my stay he played there, rain or shine, a blond pink-cheeked picture of health.

Sitka is listed as one of the rainiest towns in the world, yet no one carries an umbrella. Old-time mariners have written solemnly that the inhabitants are amphibious. But not even the newcomer minds the rain. Its tonic freshness in that dustless land makes every breath a delight. There is something in its quiet falling conducive to daydreaming and wandering about in the wet woods.

I put on my raincoat and rubber boots and went out to the Promenade of the Russians, following it along the beach toward Jamestown Bay. At the end of the road, I'd been told, Father Kashevaroff had his vacation cabin.

The town fell behind me. The tide was out. Offshore the weed-hung boulders were reflected in smooth, mist-touched water. Long-necked shags flew low toward little near-by islands.

I entered the damp, fragrant forest, and brushed through clumps of wild roses that showered me with raindrops and perfume. I wandered off the trail into clear, mossy places where ground dogwood made its mosaic of flat, white blossoms. I skirted banks of ferns and patches of wild violets hung with crystal drops. Spruce saplings no higher than my head dangled their lettuce-green tassels against my face, and from the wooded mountain side tapering cedars marched down

in single file to meet me in drifts of white clover bordering the road.

I came out on a rocky point above the bay, where the ruins of a smokehouse stood in a thicket of dripping salmon-berry bushes. A gnarled, dead spruce, white as fog, rose sketchily beyond. Perched in its bare branches with the effect of a Japanese print, were several ravens carrying on a conversation.

These dusky birds are the sardonic comedians of Alaskan coast towns. They croak hollowly, chirp flippantly, caw with raucous mockery. 'How? How? How?' shouts one. 'What-what-now?' demands another. They turn somersaults in the air, dive tail first, or fly on their backs. They pull up young vegetables to examine their roots, stalk boldly into homes, slanting a beady eye about for booty, and then, ousting the cat from its place, fly out the door with their prizes.

In the old hospitable days of the Russians, invariably twelve hours before a ship was due, the ravens gathered on the roof of the castle, waiting. This foresight the Indians called magic, but the white man accounted for it by crediting the birds with far vision and an instinct, or memory, which told them that ships meant entertaining at the castle, and much food thrown out from the kitchen.

Though the Thlingets selected this wise old bird as their symbol of the Creator, famous voyagers visiting Sitka when it was New Archangel, gave it no such glory. The Russian Captain Lutke complained that ravens were the chief drawback to the chicken industry, because they carried away not only the young

chicks, but even the old hens! The black scamps bit off the tails of all the baby pigs, with the result that every hog in the place was tailless. On the other hand, the feathered imps were such successful scavengers that they were known as the New Archangel police.

As I passed the spruce where the ravens were sitting in the rain, one of them detached himself and flew to a moss-covered stump ahead of me. He sat there eying my approach with supreme insolence. 'Walk-off!' he ordered. 'Walk-off!'

'Guess-not!' I croaked derisively. 'Guess-not!' And, recalling the 'raven vocabulary' of my childhood, I carried on a spirited exchange of insults with him, until, with a sudden ribald 'Haw! Haw! Haw!' he flapped away among the trees.

4

A turn in the road disclosed some chicken-runs and a low-eaved cabin of peeled logs. Before it, in the middle of the trail, a tall slim man stood meditating, his hands in the pockets of his faded overalls, his face to the bay. Moisture beaded his blue flannel shirt, and raindrops slid slowly along the edge of the old hat aslant on his gray hair. A clipped mustache bristled on his long upper lip.

At the sound of my approach, he shifted one suspender and turned his gray eyes on me.

'I'll be damned if I can sell an egg in this town!' was his astonishing greeting. 'Fact. Them restaurant keepers in Sitka would rather ship in cold storage eggs than take my fresh ones at the same price. And as for gettin'

rid of my young broilers — by darn, they'd rather get embalmed hens from Seattle and pay more for 'em! Ain't that a pretty how-d'-do, young woman?' He leaned belligerently toward me.

'Have you gone to them and offered your products?' I asked with interest, as my breakfast eggs came back a bit strong in my memory.

'Hell, no!' he answered with an emphatic gesture. 'Why should I? *They* know I'm runnin' this hen ranch. Have been ever since Alasky went dry. They know I'm here and got 'em for sale. I don't have to tell 'em what they know, do I? Why, I been in Sitka for fifty-eight years! *I* used to run the biggest saloon in the place. Regular bang-up bar, I'm tellin' you. Maybe you heard of Sam's Saloon, young woman?'

I could hardly credit my ears. 'Do you mean to say you're Sam, whose motto was "A pleasant smile and good liquors and segars"?' I asked eagerly.

His eyes glowed, and he laughed as he slapped his knee. 'No, I'm not Sam, but I'm the next thing to him!' he roared. 'I'm Jim Brandon, the feller what bought Sam out. Why, that was the first saloon in Sitka after us 'Mericans took it over, young woman!

'By darn! Them was the wild and woollie days, I'm tellin' you. There was no civil gove'nment and no law in Alasky in them days! Uncle Sam, damn him, just nachely forgot all about us up here for nearly twenty years after he bought us. What with the 'Merican sodjers runnin' loco, robbin' the Rooshian Church, shootin' the Injines, an' chasin' the Thlinget and creole gals, and then the Thlingets rarin' round on the

warpath burnin' houses and killin' the whites to get even, an' us respectable 'Mericans havin' to call on the bloody English war vessels for protection, an' even on the Rooshian Czar to help us because our own gove'nment wouldn't pay no attention to our troubles — by darn, I tell you them was wild days!'

He sighed. 'But I can't say I didn't enjoy 'em. Business was never better for me, though no man can accuse Jim Brandon of ever sellin' liquor to an Injine, like some of the other fellers did. No-o-o, *ma'am!* I ran a regular bang-up bar for gentlemen, I did! . . . I'm really too young to be in the hen business now,' he went on with a contemptuous squint at a clucking biddy approaching us with the insane look of her kind. 'I'm only eighty-seven year old, come Christmas, an' I feel just as young as I did forty year ago.' He straightened his big shoulders with a swagger and shoved his old hat over one eye. 'I tell these fellers from the Pioneer Home when they come hobblin' out here to see me, that they ought to be ashamed of theirselves — campin' in the Home here at seventy-five! Why, they're nothin' but young sprouts compared to me — an' I've been a heavy drinkin' man all my life — until lately. Sa-a-y, they come out here complainin' sometimes about rheumatizm. Hell! They're just in the pink of life.'

I took advantage of a breathing space to compliment Jim on his vigorous and youthful appearance.

'Say, young woman' — he waggled a forefinger at me — 'if you think I'm good-lookin' now, you ought to of seen me when I first stepped behind the bar of Sam's

Saloon! Come on in my cabin and I'll show you my picture. I want you to see what a husky young dude I used to be. And, by darn, I'm not so bad now. But Prohibition — it's knocked the tar outten us old-time saloon keepers. Sure has. Set us a-keepin' *hens!*' His voice was heavy with contempt. 'But they's still some of us left that has too much respect for good liquor to start bootleggin' now.'

I followed him into the little log house. Though it was not larger than twelve by twenty feet, it was divided into two rooms. In the first one was a small Yukon stove, and behind it a row of pots and pans hanging on nails driven into the moss-chinked wall. On a string stretched corner-wise back of the stove hung a red-checked bar towel of dingy hue. Light from one window fell on the oilclothed table where a tin of milk, a salt- and a pepper-shaker, and a coffee can filled with sugar were ranged neatly against the wall. A gray granite plate, a cup and a saucer were pyramided between a steel knife and fork in readiness for Jim's next lonely meal.

He led the way through his tiny kitchen to the adjoining room where a blanketed bunk occupied nearly all of the floor space.

'That's me!' he boomed. 'There I am!'

He indicated a bust photograph, life-size and tinted, in an elaborate gilt frame, the likeness of a young giant who had a sweeping mustache and a John L. Sullivan look. Before I could think of a proper compliment, Jim turned to another wall of the room. 'An' there's the missus as she was the day I married her.' His old

eyes rested proudly on the picture of a dark young woman in a frame that was companion to his own. She wore bangs, and was dressed in the tight-fitting basque of the seventies, with a row of buttons marching from her chin down over her rounded young bosom.

'She was a half-breed, a creole, an' a mighty fine girl!' declared Jim. 'We have one of the purtiest daughters you ever clapped an eye on, too. She's livin' in the States with her husband. He's well fixed. Fact. She has five boys, an' she wants me to go down there an' live with her an' the kids. I told her: "No. I've had enough rough stuff in my life, so you just get some one else to manage that young corporal's guard of yours."

'Yes, I do get sort o' lonesome here. My wife's been dead goin' on twenty year, an' I miss her purty bad sometimes — 'specially now that I ain't got my saloon business with the gang droppin' in. But — guess it could be worse. These damned hens keep me busy most of the time, an' the Father of Pictures comes in a lot. Sa-a-a-y — there's the boy who can tell you everything you want to know about this neck o' the woods. If you could get hold o' him — but no! It's no use. He won't have no truck with women. I can tell you stories, though, that'll make your hair stand on end, so if you ever get lonesome, young woman, you just toddle in to see me. . . . Here — hold a second! I'll give you some fresh eggs for your breakfast. If you're eatin' in them bloody restaurants downtown, you'll need 'em, by darn!'

With my eggs wrapped in paper and neatly stored in a coffee can, I stepped out again into the rain.

My host leaned against the door jamb watching my departure. His old hat was cocked over one eye. His thumb was hooked in the front pocket of his trousers, and one foot was crossed jauntily over the other. It was an attitude he must have assumed often in those far-off days when, as the proud proprietor of Sam's Saloon, he watched his bartenders serving drinks to lawless American Sitka.

After I had passed on into the forest, Jim's hearty voice rose above the cheerful cackle of his hens, and followed me in song:

> But ho! the tide was liftin' me up,
> An' a halibut gave me a push.
> I grabbed a mermaid round the waist,
> An' up we came with a rush.
> An' up we came with a ru-uh-ush!
> An' up we came with a rush!

Keeping time to the rhythm he established for me, I stepped briskly along the bay shore road until I came in sight of the little cabin which I knew to be the vacation retreat of Father Andrew Kashevaroff.

CHAPTER VI

I

FATHER ANDREW'S tiny house, embowered in wild shrubbery, squatted under some hemlocks at the end of a rocky point. Smoke from the chimney rose to join a cloud that was lifting from the tree-tops and floating up across the face of the mountain. Close to shore an orange-hued rowboat was anchored, its bright reflection splashing the green of the water that was faintly dulled by falling mist.

Father Andrew had seen me coming. Stranger though I was to him, he came out on the path to welcome me, bending low over my hand in his charming foreign manner. There was about him a youthful zest, a buoyancy of spirit, which gave one the impression that to him the present hour was ever the best in a whole lifetime full of wonder and interest.

A few minutes later my raincoat was drying behind the stove, in which a fire crackled under a singing kettle. The little white-haired priest immediately made tea in a chubby blue pot.

We took our tea in the Russian fashion, with a spoonful of wild strawberry conserve. Across the table, our cups steaming between us, Father Andrew offered me a cigarette, and lighted his own, set in a long holder of Alaskan jade.

'Your tea is delicious, Father,' I said.

He cast a disparaging glance at the little blue pot.

The beverage, to be worthy of the name, he insisted, should be made with a samovar. 'And I'm old-fashioned enough to think that a woman never looks so graceful, so charming, as when she's presiding at the tea urn,' he added. 'But what is happening?' He gestured with a slender hand. 'The age of electricity is here — and of that stuff you call solidified alcohol, an abomination in a tin can which my daughter brings home when she comes from college. Ah, soon, soon I fear even Alaskan women will find the samovar too much trouble. The charcoal for the burner will be too difficult to procure.'

Father Andrew's English was delivered with Russian vividness and a faint accent that made interesting his most commonplace utterances. Occasionally, too, he used a bit of American slang in a way so naïve and delightful that I could hardly keep from asking him to repeat it.

'But we make way for progress,' he continued, with a smile. 'Perhaps it is better so. Yet I cannot help thinking that the younger generation does not take time to enjoy life as we used to do here. I can remember so well the house of my father, who was a priest at Kodiak. My mother used to have the samovar ready for the congregation every Sunday morning after service. Also on week-day mornings, when eleven o'clock was the usual time for making calls. Then *zakuska* was served — the appetizing lunch eaten before dinner. It consisted of caviar, smoked salmon, or salt herring. Of course, there was also wine to drink, for we made much of our own wine from wild berries.

THE VACATION CABIN ON THE SHORES OF JAMESTOWN BAY

Dinner came at two o'clock; then the *siesta* for about an hour. Tea was at five and supper at eight. In those days of my youth people lived to enjoy the good life God gives us, my child! There was not the hurry, the bustle, the lack of tranquillity, that we suffer now — not so much here at Sitka, which still retains some of the serenity of the past — but in other Alaskan towns, and elsewhere.'

'Just before I reached your cabin, Father Andrew, I blundered off the trail into what appeared to be a heap of charcoal.'

'Certainly! You walked over the site of the old Russian charcoal pits!' The blue of the priest's eyes deepened. 'When Sitka's foundries were running, those kilns were kept so busy that one distinguished visitor of that time wrote: "The people of this place do nothing but make axes to cut wood to make charcoal to make axes!" Do you know, ships by the dozens from all parts of the world used to anchor off the Keekor, just to have the rats smoked out of them with charcoal. When Sir George Simpson and other noted travelers drank tea with Russian ladies in the castle, the charcoal for their samovars came from those pits you passed to-day. You do not know how it was made? I will tell you:

'A large force of men was kept busy cutting spruce and hemlock for the kilns. In a deep hole in the ground some dry pieces of wood were piled and set afire; then the logs were placed on top so that the fire but smouldered. After that, earth was banked over the whole to keep the flames under. A day or two later when the

earth was removed, the pit was full of charcoal. Why, even as late as 1880 when I came back from college in the States, this part of the bay was called "The Kiln"; and I have talked with Russians who once worked in the pits. Often, now, when I want to run downtown, I keep my room warm while I'm absent by using bits of that charcoal made over seventy-five years ago.'

Father Andrew proved to be a veritable mine of delightful reminiscences. Born at Kodiak four years before the transfer of Russian America to the United States, this kindly, humorous arch-priest, descendant of the Russian cavaliers sent out by Catherine the Great to colonize her new domain, was a connecting link between the Russian past and the American present. He was educated in San Francisco. His years of research among the archives of the Russian American Company, the private journals of distinguished Alaska colonists, and old books of travel written by voyagers of many nations have given him a knowledge of Alaskan history and traditions that has brought him into prominence as a historian. Then, too, as superintendent of the Russian Orthodox Churches in the Territory, he has traveled thousands of miles in schooners, steamers, and bidarkas, surviving dangers and hardships that rival those of any gold-seeking Argonaut who ever stormed Alaska with pick and pan.

I quite forgot time and place as I listened to his vivid tales of the days when, a young circuit rider of the North, he went visiting his parishes in a bidarka, his vestments and the sacred host lodged in the bow of his frail skin boat. Those were times that demanded

a fighting priest, a dauntless, adventuring priest who, at a moment's notice, was able to paddle out over the tempest-tossed North Pacific to take to some dying one the last sacrament of the Church.

Over our second cup of tea, Father Andrew began a tale of his missionary days before the law came to Alaska:

'It was a stormy winter day when two Indians came from the farthest village in my charge to tell me that some liquor-traders, taking advantage of my absence, were trying to debauch the natives. With a native boy I immediately put to sea in a bidarka. We had to drive into the teeth of a terrific gale. The waves were enormous, and as they broke over my small boat, every bit of clothing on me and on my helper froze stiff as we paddled. My bidarka, too, became covered with ice. Finally, I saw that I could not proceed with that skin boat. I made for the shore, and, God being with me, I found anchored in a cove a sealing schooner. Aboard it were hunters quite overcome with drink. They were snoring peacefully in the hold, so I seized the opportunity and the schooner and, with the help of my boy, weighed anchor and hoisted sail.

'Ah, how we did fly through that storm!' Father Andrew's eyes flashed with memories of forty years ago, while I thrilled to the picture of the intrepid, piratical young priest rushing thus to the aid of his flock.

When he arrived at the village, he found that the whiskey-runners had been joined by rowdies from the canneries, and together they were preparing for a 'ball' to which they had invited all the girls and young women of the village.

'But,' continued Father Andrew, with one of his dramatic gestures, 'I called my Indians together. I forbade their going to this ball and I warned them that it was but an excuse for a drunken orgy. They promised to obey me, for they knew I had never yet given them ill counsel. Had I not found them in the beginning degraded by the pernicious hootch they had learned to make from the formula given them by the whites? And had I not, in the space of three years, helped them to make their village the cleanest, the most prosperous, the most temperate, and their school the best on the entire coast? Yes, of a certainty they would obey me. But those white men — how they hate me! They come *en masse* and stand outside my schoolhouse door.

'"Who do you think you are — God Almighty?" they shout.

'"No," I answer. "But I'm his representative, and my people shall attend no drunken dance to-night."

'"If you don't lay off converting these savages, we'll do you up!" they threaten.

'"How are you going to do it?" I ask.

'"You'll find out soon enough, you Russian dog! We'll tar and feather you and set you adrift in an open boat with no grub."

'"Gentlemen," I interrupt. "Come into the schoolhouse out of the storm and make your accusations in comfort." And I step aside, indicating the open door in which I have been standing. They look astonished, then they come in, about thirty of them.

'"Now, then, tell me of what I am accused," I demand.

'"You're not an American citizen!" "You're not teaching English in the school!" "You preach allegiance to the Czar!" they all shout at once.

'"So-o-o! Well, how much money does the United States contribute toward the school here?" I ask. Those men had to admit that our Government was paying nothing, for you see it is a fact that for years after the purchase of Alaska the United States allowed the cause of education here to languish.

'"I'm teaching, then, on money supplied me by the Russian Church," I continue. "I teach geography, arithmetic, reading, and writing in English. In addition to this I do teach the Russian language. I am an American citizen, born at Kodiak, Alaska. On the Fourth of July, over my schoolhouse I raise the American flag, and my children sing in honor of it and salute it with respect. On the Fourth of July, you men run up the flag — then what do you do? You forget all about it while you get drunk and become worse than beasts. You beat each other up. That's how you honor your flag. Now, men, tell me honestly, who is the better citizen of the United States?"

'Well, those men — they look at one another, and then they look at me. In the end they come one by one and shake my hand. No, there was no drunken dance in my village that night, for, you know, at heart those men were good fellows! They were only thoughtless. Afterward we became the best of friends. The hunters on the schooner? Oh, when they had slept off their liquor, I showed them a better place to hunt than they had known before, and they, too, became my friends.'

Father Andrew leaned back in a haze of cigarette smoke and sipped his tea. And then he told me of the first time he had tried to preach the Holy Word to the natives in a little cannery village on the coast of Alaska.

'The white riff-raff took umbrage. They warned me away from there,' continued Father Andrew, with a vigorous gesture. 'They came to the house in which I was stopping — about forty of them — and threatened to burn it down if I do not leave immediately. And' — he laughed — 'of a certainty I am no angel, but something about me must have suggested feathers, for those men also insisted, in language of vehemence, that if I went to the meeting-house to preach, they would tar and feather me and set me adrift in an open boat. Their manner irritated me, for I was young and hot-headed then. My annoyance became intense. I stood in the doorway and said to them:

'"You men all play poker, and I know you know how to bluff. That's what you're trying to do to me now."

'"Bluff, nothing!" they yell, with an accompaniment of bad words. "You just start for the meeting-house, you psalm-singer, and you'll find out we're not bluffing!"

'"And the first one who starts any monkey business with me," I retort, "will meet the business end of my fist!"' Father Andrew was acting all this out for me, his eyes glowing with the light of battle. Then, as if he suddenly remembered his cloth, he went on, half apologetically: 'Of course, with those men who respected nothing but courage, I had to put on what you

call a bluff. I was really as scared as I could be,' he added naïvely, 'but I did walk through that gang to the meeting-house, and I did preach the gospel to the Indians, as I said I would.'

Knowing the little village of which Father Andrew spoke, my imagination supplied the details of that scene, as dramatic as anything that has appeared on the silver screen: the cluster of log cabins against a spruce forest, the band of high-booted, bearded ruffians peering from under slouch hats, as they reluctantly made way for the lone, courageous little missionary.

'But those men are a splendid lot, once you get to know them,' continued my host. 'After that little skirmish, they treated me royally and to-day my heart is full of gratitude to them for their consideration and many kindnesses.'

It was along this coast that Father Andrew found the most degraded natives of his career. Men, women, and children, drugged by intoxicants supplied them by unscrupulous whites, staggered about the beaches, or lay sodden in the grass. In those days painkiller, lemon and vanilla extract, and rum were vended by schooners sailing up and down the coast, and the natives, never free from the curse of such stimulants, were rendered unable to hunt either furs or food. They were nearly naked, but they did not care. Hunger and suffering were rife.

Father Andrew told me how he had lived among them for months, studying their language and their ways before he attempted to win them from the drink evil, or preach to them. First, he persuaded them to

clean up the yards about their houses, which places were like pig-sties. Then he showed them how to keep their cabins clean inside, and finally he had them taking a pride in clothing themselves properly.

'When this was done,' he continued, 'I thought it time to go after their souls. I'll never forget my first temperance meeting. I was eloquent as I begged them to give up drink — the cause of their poverty in a land of plenty. I tried to arouse their pride. I tried to stir the mother instinct in the women by telling them that the children were imitators of the mothers. For two hours I exhorted them with all the fervor of my soul. Then I asked for volunteers. "Who among you will be the first to give up drink?" I cried.

'Not a person came forward.

'I urged them again, with the same result. Just as I was convinced of my failure to move any of them, one old Indian rose.' The priest's eyes began to twinkle. 'How I lauded that man! How I praised his will power! How I thanked God for him! And then — when I had finished, my convert spoke: "Yes, Father," said he, with virtue radiating from him, "I have never drunk a drop in my life!" '

Father Andrew laughed. 'Was not that the great joke on me? But I won them — I kept after them until every man, woman, and child in that village had signed the pledge. They all kept it, too! And do you know what those people of mine did years afterward? When a cable station went in near their village, they sent their first message to me — and it was a message of love and a request that I visit them soon!' From the

light in Father Andrew's eyes it was evident that this simple act was indeed a full reward to him for his young years of service and privation spent among a heathen people.

After this, strange facts drifted into the priest's talk as he recalled his early labors — witchcraft, shamanism, spiritism. But perhaps the strangest of all was the punishment for infidelity that he had found prevalent among the Thlinget Indians. In those days, when a wife suspected that her mate's affections were straying, she promptly bit off his nose, thereby not only proclaiming to the world his unfaithfulness, but disfiguring him so that no other woman would want him. The aptness of the punishment may be properly appreciated only when one considers that the Thlingets knew nothing of kissing; their tenderest caress consisted of rubbing noses.

Husbands, whose wives were found to have philandering inclinations were, of course, accorded the same amputating privileges.

Among the Eskimos in isolated communities, this custom is in vogue to-day, but there are delicate variations in these conjugal matters difficult for an outsider to understand. For instance, during the squirrel-hunting season, two Eskimo hunters may, with perfect propriety, change wives for a night or two, so that the tribal ties may be strengthened when children are born; or they may change wives for the duration of a whale-hunting trip. But the Eskimo discovered making *secret* love to his neighbor's wife pays the penalty with the loss of his nose.

In 'The Adventures of John Jewett,' a narrative written by a young man made captive in 1803 by the Nootkas of British Columbia, this custom is described thus: 'I was sent for,' writes Jewett, 'by my neighbor Yealthlower, the king's eldest brother, to file his teeth, which operation having been performed, he informed me that a new wife whom he had purchased a little time before, had refused to sleep with him, and it was his intention, provided she persisted in her refusal, to bite off her nose. I endeavored to dissuade him from it, but he was determined, and in fact performed his savage threat that very night, saying since she would not be his wife she should not be that of another. And in the morning he sent her back to her father.'

The Thlinget of to-day arranges his marital differences in the divorce court of the white man.

2

Father Andrew Kashevaroff has risen high in the service of his Church, though when young his great ambition was to be a musician. At eighteen he was a performer of promise on the organ, the piano, and the violin. His first work for the Church at Sitka — then the capital of Alaska — was training a choir for which the old Russian town immediately became famous. He grew eloquent as he told me of his Indian chorus.

'Ah, those wonderful voices!' he exclaimed, his hands gesturing, his body swaying. 'They were like silver bells! And I played on them as the master on the organ! It was like paradise when they sang the Russian Christmas carols during the Holy Week, when we carry

the great Yuletide star from house to house. Oh, those nights with the starlight on the snow, and the flickering tapers of the singers in the procession! My heart soars to-day, when I remember the tenor of Makar — that devil Indian boy who had the voice of an angel! How I worked with him! How I trained him! And it was not in vain, for afterward he went out to the big world and made it applaud him. . . . To me, Russian music, like none other, can touch the heart. To be sure, I love also the operas — "Il Trovatore," "Faust" ——' He hummed snatches from each before he continued. 'Sometimes I used to listen to selections from them over the radio from New York, from San Francisco, but of late they have these men singers with voices like the ram, who sing what you call jazz, and, ah, Heaven! they end every line with a bleat which gives me dyspepsia. I listen no more.'

Father Andrew has five daughters, three of whom have been graduated from colleges in the States. In the Russian Orthodox Church all secular priests must be married, the ceremony taking place before ordination. The wife must be of the same faith as her husband, otherwise he forfeits his right to the orders. But if she dies, the priest may not marry again.

With the Russian revolution in 1917 came the severing of relations with the mother Church and a complete stoppage of funds and compensation. The parishioners in Alaska had never been asked to contribute to the support of the Russian clergy, and the mere mention of donations was met in most sections with criticism and, quite frequently, insulting comment.

Being thus faced with disaster, the priests of the faith met the crisis with a courage and energy that won the admiration of the North. To a man they continued their missionary and educational work, laboring without material compensation.

Happily, they were permitted to eke out their subsistence as best they might. Some of them did clerical work; others, during the summer months, took laborers' jobs in the canneries, making barely enough to buy their food. In this commercial age such devotion to the work of the picturesque Church of the Czars is touching.

Over a fresh pot of tea, Father Andrew and I fell to talking of prohibition. 'You'll be surprised to learn,' he said, 'that despite the alcoholic reputation of my ancestors, prohibition was declared in Alaska during the Russian régime. But wait, I shall read to you from some translations I am making.' From his desk he took a thick, leather-bound volume in which were some typed pages. 'This book was written by that gay young Russian traveler, Alexander Markoff. It is called "The Russians in the Eastern Ocean" — in St. Petersburg the Pacific was so called in those days. Markoff was visiting here in Sitka during the incumbency of Governor Etholin, between 1840 and 1845. Thus he writes of that time':

> The use of intoxicating liquors was prohibited during residence in the Colonies with the exception of sea voyages. This important prohibition, so terrible for many individuals, was declared in open assembly of all colonial employees and some of them, on receiving the disastrous piece of news, could not restrain their tears!

Father Andrew looked up at me, humorous little wrinkles forming about his eyes. 'Markoff, as well as his sailors, must have felt the drought keenly, for they all rejoiced together when they were making ready to leave dry Sitka for Yerba Buena, the San Francisco of to-day. Listen to him':

> How easily and willingly the labor of getting the ship under way was performed! Each sailor had it in his mind that he could enjoy himself in the first bar-room of California! . . . Said one sailor speaking of Sitka: 'The Devil himself must have planted the sea-otter in this out-of-the-way region. As far as we can see up and down the coast, not a single rum shop is to be found!' 'Yes,' answered another. 'But I remember Father Baranov. There was a time when a camp kettle was set brimming full, and he would shout: "Drink, my children!" And he would join himself in a merry song. Those were better times,' he continued, his eye on the waning land. 'But now what a time we have! We can do nothing but work and when that is done, we smoke in the barracks or promenade. What a life!'

The little priest closed the book. Smiling whimsically, he swung his head from side to side. 'Ah, men do not change, my child. Always they are belittling the present and looking longingly at the past — especially the bibulous past!'

Father Andrew brought forth other odd facts from his old books. The Alaskan Russians, he said, were fond of the taro or breadfruit of the Sandwich Islands, and used to trade their Alaskan ivory for Hawaiian pearls, and their salt fish and timber for sugar, syrup, and coffee. It was from California, however, that they bought their wheat. When the gold discovery of '49

stopped all agricultural pursuits there and sent prices rocketing, Sitka was forced to send her ships to Hamburg, Valparaiso, Chile, and Hawaii for foodstuffs.

'The Russian colonies were not without a part in that gold rush of '49,' the priest continued. 'In one of the old archives of the Russian American Company I came upon this':

> The Company, as an experiment, sent a party of its laborers under command of a mining engineer to the Yuba River, California, and in three months they took out twelve pounds of pure gold which was sent to St. Petersburg and turned over to the mint and coined. They did not repeat this experiment, as the facilities for the desertion of the serfs were too great.

'To us who have known the freedom and glamour of gold-rush days, what a travesty! And what a story might be written around one of those "serfs" who broke from the iron hand of Russia, and took up a new life among the reckless, rollicking Argonauts in the days of '49!'

While we talked, we were able to look out through a wide window that gave on Jamestown Bay, and see a launch coming into sight towing a schooner to the tranquil anchorage just off the point. The incident reminded Father Andrew of the ships that had been built in Sitka's shipyards on the very spot where today the tent market of the Thlingets stands.

The first vessel, launched there in 1806, was the tender Avoss. The last and most famous to slide from the ways was the pug-nosed side-wheeler, Politkovsky, built in 1863. A hundred and thirty feet long she was, made of Alaskan yellow cedar, the *dushnoi-dereva*, or

scented wood of the Russians. Her four-inch planks were hewn from immense logs and fastened together with copper spikes hand-beaten from virgin metal. She carried fourteen iron, and two brass, cannon and the metal of her copper boilers was three fourths of an inch thick. This historic old keel continued to plough the Northern seas until the days of the Klondyke, when the vessel was wrecked off the port of Saint Michael, where the yellow Yukon flows into Bering Sea. Part of its frame is still preserved in the Alaska Historical Museum at Juneau.

One by one, from the sands where their bones lie bleaching, Father Andrew brought back to life those old Alaskan ships, until finally he was telling me tales from the journal of his uncle, Alexander Kashevaroff, lieutenant in the Imperial Navy, commanding the Russian brig Constantine. This intrepid Russian was the first white man to reach Point Barrow, the farthest northern tip of the American continent. Leaving his ship several hundred miles south of his destination, he fought his way in a bidarka toward the polar sea, barely missing death at the hands of hostile Eskimos. For years afterward his charts of those hitherto unknown shores were used by other navigators.

'In the days of my uncle's command,' said Father Andrew, 'no Russian ship left port without the ceremony of the blessing. It was a grand occasion, especially when distinguished visitors were sailing. The Governor and his staff, dressed in full uniforms of buff and blue, with gold and silver trimmings, marched under salute down the gangway. Here the ship's

captain met them. Priests and acolytes in splendid robes were there on the deck to read the prayers. The Russian flag was lowered from the masthead and touched with holy water, as was the masthead also. Then the arch-priest, waving a silver-handled brush, went about sprinkling holy water on the crew — for those were wild times on a practically uncharted coast, my child, and the fear of shipwreck hung heavy in every heart.'

'What days of glorious romance, Father! And what a gallant pioneering breed they were who challenged the hazards of this wild land with pageantry and ceremonial glitter!'

'Yes,' admitted the little priest, 'through the red banner of their courage ran threads of gold.'

I thought this a beautifully turned sentence and told Father Andrew so. Then both of us, growing pleased with each other, and with ourselves for being so appreciative, drank a little toast to Alaska's picturesque past, and to each other. The fire crackled a cheerful accompaniment; there was the soft sound of rain falling on leaves outdoors, and the occasional thud of a cone on the roof. The fragrance from the wet forest came in through the open door.

Father Andrew called a greeting to an Indian passing along the trail with a big silver salmon hanging over his shoulder, then he turned to me.

'If you want to hear beautifully turned sentences that are really poetry,' he said, 'it's too bad you can't listen to the Father of Pictures when he feels like talking. But you see,' he added with the confidential air of one

imparting a profound secret, 'he doesn't like women, and so it's absolutely impossible to ——'

'Great Peter!' I exclaimed in sudden exasperation. 'Pardon me, Father, but the reiteration of that man's misogyny has nettled me at last. Where, by all that's godly, does this woodland monk live?'

Father Andrew threw back his head and laughed with downright enjoyment. 'You, too, my dear?' he concluded significantly. He chuckled all the while he was helping me into my raincoat. Then he gave me detailed instructions about the trail that led to the forest cabin of Merrill, the Father of Pictures.

As I left him standing in his doorway, waving me good-bye, I thought that the twinkle in his kindly eyes was just a bit mischievous.

CHAPTER VII

I

I HAD no difficulty finding Ferndale, the retreat of the Father of Pictures. It was just off the trail, a small shingled house with a skylight on the northern slope of the roof. Silvered by rains and snows it stood on a knoll, its back to the forest, its front windows looking out on the rain-pricked bay.

The path led up through a wild garden of moss-covered stumps and logs. From this green plush sprang a fairy-like forest of seedling trees and delicate ferns and the flat white flowers of ground dogwood. Bumblebees, undaunted by the dampness, worked in the red cups of salmon-berry blossoms, and little cedars slapped me with fragrant wet boughs as I passed.

Mounting the steps to the unroofed porch, I knocked on the door. There was no answer. It was so quiet I could hear the rain dripping from the trees and the seep of it in the moss. I walked to one end of the porch to look at the gray bole of a giant spruce that overspread the cabin — and stifled an exclamation. In the shelter of the tree on the dry moss a beautiful young woman lay fast asleep!

Her golden, unbobbed hair was pillowed on her arm, her figure was enveloped in a raincoat of yellow oiled silk, and her little rain hat of the same material nodded like a flower on the green of a near-by fern.

Wondering who she might be, I tiptoed down the steps and went over beside her to get in out of the wet.

I settled myself to await the return of the Father of Pictures, but, despite my determination to keep a wary eye on his door, the falling rain made me drowsy. In no time I, too, curled up on the moss and went to sleep.

2

When I woke, I became aware that the rain had stopped. Sunshine, shafting down through the branches, fell on my companion, who was sitting up twisting her long tawny hair into a knot as she watched me. She smiled, showing even white teeth.

'Hello!' she said casually. 'Are you waiting for him too?' We regarded each other a moment, then simultaneously broke into laughter. 'Well,' she continued cheerfully, 'I hope you bring me a change of luck. Every afternoon for three days I've camped under this tree, but I've seen never so much as a glimpse of him. Good Heavens!' — she was evidently struck with a new idea. 'No doubt he returned while we were both asleep here and then took to the woods for good! You know they say he ——'

'Doesn't like women!' I finished her sentence, and we both laughed again.

We were friends from that moment. With our backs against the tree-trunk we began to get acquainted. Her name was Kay Van Buren; she was a musician, a widow, and not yet thirty. Her interest in tribal songs had brought her to Sitka, where she hoped to learn from the Father of Pictures many things about the strange minor chants of the Thlingets.

'He could tell me if he cared to,' she declared, 'because the natives have always trusted him, and the man actually has a photographic record of their changing ways for the last twenty-five years, maybe more — their dress, their arts, their music, *everything!* I'm willing to pay for any information he can give me — but, Heavens! the man is utterly indifferent to money!'

She went on to tell me what she had learned of the Father of Pictures: Like a denizen of Kipling's heaven, he worked apparently only 'for the joy of the working.' He had been offered fifty thousand dollars for his collection of curios, a collection of the rarest objects of Thlinget arts and crafts existent to-day, but money had failed to induce him to part with a single item. 'Yet, if some one comes along who appreciates his treasures, they say he will give generously and without price,' continued Kay. 'His photographic studies of Alaskan scenery are reputed to be the finest ever taken; each print is a work of art inducing, like music, a dream, a vision in the beholder. But he won't sell them to any one unless they get the message of his pictures.

'Last week when the steamer came in one of those self-important woman tourists bustled into his studio and asked him the price of a certain study.

'"Twelve dollars," he told her.

'"Too much!" snapped the lady. "I'll give you five, and not a cent more. Why, there isn't a square foot of paper in the whole thing!"

'The Father of Pictures took the study from her and stood looking down at it with pained, bewildered eyes. "Madam, is *that* all you can see in my picture?" he

asked in a quiet, wondering way. "Then it is a failure. It is worth nothing at all." And he tore it slowly to bits and dropped it to the floor.

'And you know' — my new friend was warming to her subject — 'he has discovered a way of exquisitely tinting dim photographic studies so that they look like delicate water-colors. The people here can't understand why he refuses to commercialize his method and turn out his pictures in quantity. One of the launchmen at the cannery told me: "Why, that blamed fellow could be rollin' in wealth if he'd only be business-like. Instead, he's so particular he takes a couple o' months sometimes to get out one picture. Then, if some one comes along who can talk art with him, darned if he don't up and give the blamed thing away for nothing! Rich guys from all over send him commissions, but he won't work unless he happens to feel what he calls the mood of the picture! *I've* tried to buy his stuff, since every one seems so crazy about it; but just when I want something, he takes a notion to go off into the hills to study dicky-birds, or look for stone axes or other prehistoric junk. Gosh! What can you do with a guy who don't care for money!"' Kay laughed. 'And that's what I say — "What can you do with a guy who don't care for money?"'

Then she touched on the mystery of the artist's past. 'He *is* a mystery, you know,' she asserted. 'For twenty-five years he has lived here, but to-day his fellow townsmen know no more about his antecedents than they did when he came. But it's certain he has their love and their admiration, even though they may not under-

stand him. And it's a tribute to him that they do not try to pry behind the curtain of his reticence. They accept him for what he is, a man of superior intellect, a man who is revealing the beauties of Alaska to outsiders, a man who is sought by all distinguished visitors, a man who cares nothing for money.

'Of course there are those who hint that he has a secret gold mine back in the hills where he mines enough for his needs; and there are others who have told me of his visits to Juneau, the capital, where he dines with the Governor and wears beautifully tailored clothes with the air of a man long accustomed to them.' She paused a moment, her eyes resting on the closed door of the shingled house. 'Everything I hear of that darned man makes him more interesting and more of a figure of mystery,' she finished.

As we talked, the clearing afternoon grew in beauty. Silver and violet the clouds rolled up from the densely treed mountains and floated high across the sky. Sunlight and shadow played on the rain-washed foliage, and birds came out of their shelters to trill and warble in the forest behind us.

And that Father of Pictures continued to remain a figure of mystery to us, for he did not come home.

After a while I spoke of being hungry. My new friend promptly pulled a substantial package from each of her raincoat pockets. 'My lunch and dinner,' she said. 'I always go prepared to stay away all day — especially since I've been trailing the Father of Pictures. Fall to, and we'll call this dinner.'

We ate all the sandwiches and, making cups of

leaves, went to a near-by spring for drinking water. As I drank, I looked over the edge of my leaf and espied Father Kashevaroff's empty rowboat a short distance down the shore. That splash of orange on the emerald tide was an invitation not to be resisted. 'Let's go for a boat ride,' I suggested. 'Perhaps when we get back here we'll find our quarry cooking his bachelor dinner. It stands to reason he must eat.'

Kay proved to be as good an oarsman as I am. Hushed at first, and thrilled by the beauty of our surroundings, we took turns rowing along the shore.

Our orange prow cut the water where every weed-hung boulder, every forested mountain slope, every snow-tipped peak was reflected. In places the sun struck down through the water revealing schools of tiny fish, each wee head pointed in the same direction and all motionless as if imprisoned in crystal. Jellyfish floated lazily, and starfish, red, purple, and orange, glimmered amidst golden seaweed swaying in the depths. The late sunlight swam on the hills across the bay, hills rising from amethyst and blue shadows and so thickly timbered that distance gave them the texture of plush. And there was an after-the-rain freshness about everything that made us feel very young and bold-hearted and like discovering something.

I began to tell stories of Alaskan adventure while Kay was rowing. When it was my turn at the oars, Kay sang songs of adventure. With the passage of time the two of us put ourselves into such a swash-buckling frame of mind that we were reluctant to return to our post under the tree, even though we

thought the Father of Pictures might have come home. 'We'll just see what lies beyond that point yonder,' we'd agree; and then we'd go there.

> 'Oh, I'm not a man-o-war, nor a privateer,' said he.
> Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we.
> But I'm a salt-sea pirate a-lookin' for my fee,
> Cruisin' down the coast of the High Barbaree!

sang Kay to an astonished sea-gull that veered off our prow. And thus we cruised among the little islands until the sun sank low in the northwest, and the atmosphere took on a soft luminous quality that touched sky, sea, and land with evening color.

When we reached the spot offshore from Mount Verstovia, where one may hear an echo that comes back eight times, Kay stood, a slim golden figure in the bow, and cupping her mouth with her hands, sent her contralto against the wooded slope:

> The white moth to the closing bine,
> The bee to the opened clover,
> And gypsy blood to the gypsy blood,
> Ever the wide world over. . . .

She'd sing a line, and wait until her clear strong tones had reverberated through the hills into silence before she began a new line. The effect in the calm evening was enchanting. The very loveliness of the world promised us something, and we both felt convinced that when we reached Ferndale, we'd not only find the Father of Pictures there, but that he would invite us in and tell us all the things we wanted to know.

We turned back and rowed vigorously toward the shore. Anchoring the rowboat where we'd found it, we

waded to the beach and hopefully made our way through the wild garden to the door of the little shingled house.

But the Father of Pictures wasn't at home. At least he didn't answer our knock. Subdued, we turned away from the place and slowly followed the homeward trail through the forest.

3

We were in no mood to go into the village, which that evening was destined to be unduly active on account of the expected arrival of the Governor.

'Let's go up to the old Russian graveyard,' I said. 'I haven't been there since I was a little girl.'

'All right,' agreed Kay in momentary gloom. 'That's one place where we'll be sure to find every one at home.'

Accordingly we left the forest and took a path that skirted a creek hidden under a canopy of elderberry bushes. Water trickled in the shadows. Big cool white flowers spilled scent on us. Waist-high ferns brushed us.

We came out on a knoll back of the Church of Saint Michael at a spot where the Russians once had their tea gardens. Here, along the flower-bordered walks of olden days, epauleted officers of the Czar strolled with their silk-clad ladies, or sipped Hankow tea in the arbors. The tea garden is but a memory now, and the spruce grove which grew up on the site after the Americans came, is being cut away to make room for Sitka's growing residence district.

We walked on toward the site of the last blockhouse, which stood on the line of the stockade that once protected Sitka from the Thlingets. Nothing remains of the stockade, either. And though the blockhouse, built of logs, was standing in good condition until a few years ago, instead of preserving this historic monument, some enterprising Babbitt of the town had it torn down. About it were found dozens of cannon balls, mute witnesses to the drama of the hostile Indian years. The United States observatory stands on the site of the blockhouse, but Kay and I did not pause to inspect it. Although no trace of the old cemetery was yet visible, I knew it must lie in the woods ahead of us.

We sauntered on through clumps of alders, low thickets of fern and sweet brier. The path took us farther and farther up the slope into the semi-obscurity of tree-trunks. Tall spruce and hemlocks closed in about us. The dusk deepened, and while the birds were piping their evening songs elsewhere, here there were none — only bats winging across the twilit spaces. We felt suddenly remote from all other human beings. Though we could see no sign of gravestones, a strange cemetery silence pervaded the spot. We knew the dead were near. . . . Instinctively we drew closer together.

I've always longed to see a ghost in a graveyard, but I've wanted to see it in front of me. . . . For no reason I kept looking back over my shoulder. So did Kay. Presently, with one accord, we stopped in the middle of the trail and started a whispered consultation. Hastily we agreed that the woods were indeed damp, and that

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THE OLD RUSSIAN BLOCKHOUSE, RECENTLY TORN DOWN

perhaps it might be better if we came back in the daylight to find the old burial ground. We began a retreat, both trying to give it the appearance of casualness — then stopped and caught at each other.

During the moment's pause our eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom and we saw that it was too late to go back. All about us, half hidden under inky boughs of spruce and hemlock, leaning three-barred crosses stretched broken arms from the shadows. The grave-mounds were lost beneath a tangle of ferns and wild roses.

We stood our ground then, and in a moment my foolish fears slipped from me. Lonely and wild was this resting-place on the hill, yet it was not mournful. Cemeteries are only mournful when they hold the bodies of those whose lives have been uneventful, futile. Here lay empire builders of Mother Russia — gentlemen adventurer and bearded *promyshleniki*, fair-haired princess and creole belle, soldier and priest, sea captain and exile. The forest that sprang from their graves was but a fitting symbol of their sturdy souls.

'Where does your princess lie?' whispered Kay, referring to a tale I'd told her earlier in the evening. I didn't know exactly, but leading the way I penetrated deeper into the woods looking for the grave of the young Princess Maksoutova, who was the first wife of Prince Dmitri Maksoutov, Alaska's last Russian Governor. Many times had my father told me about this frail, golden-haired lady who died in an upper chamber of the log castle soon after her arrival in Sitka. The costly carved stone that was hauled from St. Petersburg

across the whole of Russia and Siberia, to mark her grave, once looked out over the weird tombs of Indian chiefs brave with totemic crests of the Thlingets. A strange burial place for one who had known the court of his Imperial Majesty Alexander II!

Those Indian graves are gone to-day. After the withdrawal of the American troops left Sitka at the mercy of the natives, vengeful Indians defaced the monument of the Princess and carried it away. Later, a romantic young lieutenant in the United States Marines sought out the grave in the underbrush, and had placed upon it the gray granite slab which Kay and I found nearly obscured under grasses and leaves. On it in Russian are carved these words:

Here rests the body of
Princess Aglaida Ivanovna Maksoutova
Wife of a captain of 2nd rank
Born in the year 1834
Died Dec. 18th, 1862

We left the Princess in her little alder thicket, and tramped on toward the top of the hill. The dusk was sweet with the scent of crushed ferns and the brier roses that caught at our garments as we waded through them. We progressed slowly through the thick growth . . . the woods grew denser . . . the sky was blotted out by thick interlacing branches overhead . . . and finally we were stooping as we made our way beneath the shaggy boughs of hemlocks.

It was dark and earthy there. Cool fingers of thimbleberry and fern touched our faces. . . . Bats darted.

. . . Ghostly arms of crosses thrust themselves out from behind the boles of trees. . . . I was beginning to wish we hadn't ventured into this forgotten spot when suddenly we broke through the forest into the blessed light of the evening sky, and a cleared place at the top of the hill.

A platform of great timbers stood before us. On it were rough seats pitted and scarred with the carved names of those who, for nearly half a century, have sat there to watch the sun set on the bay. 'I never knew what was meant by the glory of God until I saw the sun go down from the top of Sitka's Russian Hill,' an old sea captain once told me.

Kay and I were too late this evening for the spectacular beauty of the sunset, but in the northwest sky still lingered a clear lemon yellow which merged into orange behind the plum-dusted little islands that swam in the harbor below. There were sweeps of night-shadowed forest, a row of saplings beyond which the sharp roofs of the Indian Village peaked themselves; then, swinging to the east, the Keekor with its modern building silhouetted against the far peaks of Silver Bay, blued now with twilight. The soft Alaskan light touched everything with glamorous mystery. One felt the vastness and beauty of the world, the cleanness of the wind and sea, the romantic quality of life.

It was here that the belles of Sitka used to come to watch for the ships of their absent lovers. Perhaps those wistful ones left behind something of what they dreamed, and hoped for, and suffered, for into my

mind came tales of old loves and hates and beautiful ladies, tales which I told to Kay.

There was the story of little Russian Nadia with mysterious eyes set in a pale delicate face, and a slow smile that set the hearts of a garrison aflame during the first year of the American occupation. Her most ardent suitors were a young captain and a lieutenant. These, the Damon and Pythias of the regiment, had long shared everything they had, their money, their clothes, their quarters at the officers' club, but as they paid court to the girl their friendship of a lifetime turned to hatred.

Nadia accepted the Lieutenant.

The happiness of the engaged lovers was the delight of old Sitka, and in time even the Captain appeared to be reconciled to his loss of the girl. One day he and the Lieutenant, apparently again on friendly terms, obtained permission from their commanding officer to go off on a hunting trip together. Some hours later the Captain staggered back to the village with the body of his companion on his shoulders. He asserted, with every profession of grief, that the Lieutenant had met death through the accidental discharge of his own gun.

In the year that followed, the Captain renewed his suit for the hand of the broken-hearted Nadia, but without success. When he was convinced that the girl was true to the memory of her lover, he fell into moods of despondency, alternated with wild bursts of gayety. Finally, one pay-day night, he gave a party in the officers' club — the gayest, most brilliant festivity Sitka had known since the days of the Russian occupa-

tion. There was music and dancing and singing. Wine flowed like water. After the ladies had gone home, the officers themselves continued until, just before the dawn, they ended by carrying the Captain along Governor's Walk, singing his praises.

But next morning they found him, still in his dress uniform, his body fallen forward on his desk. A self-directed bullet was in his heart, and under his bowed head was a remorseful letter. In it he told how he had provoked his comrade, the Lieutenant, to a duel, and, with the hunting trip as an excuse, the two had gone off into the forest back of Indian River to shoot it out. The Captain, having lost his sweetheart and killed his best friend, had not the courage to live out his years alone.

In the American cemetery still stands the stained headstone where the lovely Nadia wept for her lieutenant lover. Under the moss you may read the inscription:

B. W. Livermore
Lieut.
2nd U.S. Art.

'She must have sat where we're sitting now,' said Kay, when I had finished the story. 'Little Russian Nadia with her pointed chin and her soft eyes filled with light. . . . Perhaps some of these nearly obliterated initials were carved by her tall lieutenant in an afterglow that faded over half a century ago. . . . And perhaps she sat beside him in her billowing skirts, her rosy finger tracing the fresh-cut grooves while she

looked up into his face with the slow smile that sowed the seeds of tragedy.'

The faint perfume of brier roses about us was the magic that unrolled the scroll of history still farther back to the scarlet and gold splendor of Russian days; to a governor's daughter who, separated by ten thousand miles from the perfumes of her own land, used the petals of the Alaskan rose to scent her garments.

In the log castle on the Keekor she danced and sang and fell in love, and, like Nadia of a later day, her choice was a handsome young under-officer, instead of the high commander who sought her hand. The Governor — some say it was Baron von Wrangell — sent the lover away on a cunningly planned cruise from which he never returned, and the girl was forced into a marriage with the officer favored by her father. On the night of the wedding festivities, while music and laughter floated out over the peaceful waters of Sitka Bay, the bride disappeared from the ballroom.

They found her later in a small drawing-room overlooking the sea. The white of her wedding gown was stained crimson, as was the little hand on which gleamed the ring of the man she loathed. In her other hand she held the dagger with which she had taken her life. The Lady in White, she is called; and tradition says as long as the grim old castle remained she came back to it each year on the night of All Souls.

In the first days of the American occupation many a gay young soldier spent the night in the deserted log mansion watching for her return. Some in Sitka today claim to have heard the swish of her ghostly wed-

ding garments as she paced through the empty rooms — garments which left behind them the faint, sad perfume of brier roses. And some there are who say they have seen her standing at the window facing the sea, her wistful eyes heavy with tears, her slender jeweled hands outstretched in loneliness and longing to the lover who never came back to her.

There were other stories less sad about the castle and the gallant ladies who rode on horseback across Russia and across Siberia to grace it. I recalled them one by one for Kay, until a steamer, dim and mysterious in the twilight, crept into sight and across the tinted harbor below. It sent my thoughts to Baranov coming home to Sitka from a successful voyage to the westward, his turbaned East Indian servant following with his cloak, his adoring Aleuts at his heels, and his trained minstrels sending out their welcoming strains from the top of his castle steps. What were the songs they sang in those days? What was the Russian music like? Kay was wondering, when suddenly across the village, across the spruce saplings, there came to us the faint harmony of reed instruments.

Under the spell of the Alaskan night there was one startled, enchanted moment when we looked at each other, almost believing in enchantment.

Then our minds leaped from the first Alaskan Governor to the last. We realized that the dim steamer had come in to the dock below, and that Sitka's modern band was on the wharf welcoming the expected chief executive of American Alaska.

CHAPTER VIII

I

The bells of Saint Michael's woke me next morning, but secure in the knowledge that they would continue to ring for half an hour before the Liturgy began, I lay hugging my comfort while the sound of them echoed through my memory. The years slipped back to a Sunday of my childhood when my father's schooner lay anchored off the end of Governor's Walk. I saw my small self and my two brothers climbing into the rigging to listen, for the first time, to those bells, and watch them swing in the clock-faced tower of the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel.

My father on the deck below us stood listening, too, both hands in his pockets, his head thrown back.

'Hark to the voice of 'em that comes from the other side of the world,' he said, and I know now that he was reveling in the distance encompassed by that thought. 'It's a long trail they've traveled, tads — a long trail from Moscow. Nearly seven thousand miles, they say, by caravan over the steppes of Russia and Siberia they came, and then three thousand by galiot across Bering Sea and down the coast of Alaska!'

We little ones harkened and, as we had not yet been taught to connect God with wooden buildings and chimes, those Sabbath bells said to us:

Ding — dong . . . Mos — cow!
Dong — dong — dong — dong . . . Si — be — ri — a!
Ding — dong — dong . . . Ca — ra — van!

CATHEDRAL OF SAINT MICHAEL
THE ARCHANGEL

WHEN THE BISHOP VISITS SITKA
Father Kashevaroff is at the right of the bottom row.

And swinging there in the rigging of the Tyee, we small pagans raised our shrill voices and sang in unison with them:

Mos — cow!
Si — bee — ree — ah!
Car — ray — van!

With those old words ringing in my mind, I dressed and hurried out into the sunny road that led to the Russian church, now the greatest historical monument to the Russian occupation left in Alaska.

All six bells, from the smallest of seventy-five pounds, to the largest of fifteen hundred pounds, were swinging in their niches. I had not gone far, however, before the big bell tolled alone. It sounded singularly deep and heavy in quiet Sitka; but a priest once told me that the great cathedral bell in his native Russian city weighed forty thousand pounds. Its resonant, mellow voice, when two men struck its side with the clapper, was so strong that the windows in the neighboring houses trembled.

Before the entrance of Saint Michael's this morning stood a group of uncertain tourists. Their smart traveling clothes made a strange note of modernity against the half-open door with its medieval-looking lock. A squaw ducked her kerchiefed head and slipped past them, and I, following her, stepped from the frontier street of Sitka into the old-world splendor of Saint Michael's.

The Russian Orthodox Church has no seats, no pews, no hassocks, so I stood on the women's side be-

hind the circle of pillars which supports the dome over the three altars. Sunlight from the windows of the dome filtered down into the dim interior, ivory and gold and sweet with the honey smell of melting wax and the incense of years. Light from hundreds of tapers flickered on the beaten gold and silver garments of the saints on the *Ikonastas* — the famous screen of twelve ikons which rises between the eyes of the worshipers and the Sanctuary. I was aware of massive brass and silver candelabra hanging from the ceiling, of five-foot floor candlesticks, of *lampadas* burning before the Virgin and the Christ on either side of the Royal Gates, of the Royal Gates' carved, bronzed doors through which the Holy Sacrament is borne out from the Sanctuary to the faithful. I saw again the Last Supper, the magnificent, priceless ikon above the Gates, with faces painted on ivory and figures draped in beaten silver. And I saw Our Lady of Sorrows in garments of pearl-studded gold.

At the foot of the altar steps lay an immense pillow of faded red velvet, the gift of Nicholas II, the last Czar of Russia.

I looked for and found remembered favorites of mine associated with the perils of the sea — an exquisitely carved ivory Annunciation, a crystal candelabra, a heavy, chased silver *lampada* all gifts of grateful Russian sailors saved from ships that had gone down off the wild coast of Alaska when it was uncharted and little known. I found myself picturing those men in their garb of a bygone time, kneeling before the Sitka Virgin — those larrikin adventurers, fearless, plunder-

ing perhaps, yet holding close to their picturesque religion like a child to its mother's hand.

Those Russian sailors shared with the Spaniards the naïve trait of boldly claiming for all their enterprises — doubtful and otherwise — not only the blessing of God, but the assistance of the entire heavenly host. They sailed unknown seas to dangerous lands in ships that bore such protective titles as Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and The Holy Trinity. And at the time their Spanish contemporaries were marching up the shores of California setting up crosses, sprinkling holy water, and commemorating saints in titles of mountains, bays, and missions, the Russian sea-rovers were sailing down the glacier-walled coast of Alaska christening in the same manner its peaks, and waters, and fur dépôts.

The map of the North Pacific coast, once asserted our Irish mate on the Tyee, read like a Litany. 'And belike, 'tis just as well,' he would add, and proceed to profess his deep pity for the Pilgrim fathers who came over in the Mayflower. 'Never a saint had they to protect them from the Indian varmints in the New World,' he would deplore. 'Not even a bit of a holy name on the vessel of them!' And he marveled at the courage of a people who ran such risks for the sake of an austere religion which he considered devoid alike of splendor and of comfort to the soul!

As a schoolgirl I laughed at him — when we were safe in port. But many a night when the Tyee, under close-reefed sails, rode out a gale off the reefs of Saint Elias, I joined him in fervently supplicating the saint whose name Vitus Bering gave to that perilous promontory.

'Those who never sailed the sea have never prayed to God.' I was thinking of this old Russian proverb when a throng of incoming worshipers took their places in front of me, cutting off my vision of the Virgin's gifts. They were nearly all Thlingets, for there are few Russians left in Sitka to-day. The men stood on the right side of the church, the women on the left, and every dark, serious face was turned steadfastly toward the altar. Though their Sunday clothes were very clean, they were as wrinkled as when they had been taken that morning from the carved cedar chests in which the Thlinget keeps his best.

Young women, with heavy babies sagging in their arms, stood with the others, until I ached for them. Toddlers tugged at their mothers' skirts, or ran over to their fathers and peeped shyly at me from under the parent coat-tails. Jimmy the Bear Boy, crossing himself rapidly and continuously, shuffled in and stood by a pillar. An ancient squaw with a face like a dried mushroom tottered by me, steadying both palsied hands on a stick in front of her. She knelt in a series of subsidences, and during the entire service displayed the utmost vigor and devotion by making the sign of the cross and bowing her forehead to the floor. There were many healthy-looking young Thlinget girls with bobbed hair, and on the other side a number of copper-colored Thlinget youths, stalwart and dignified as chiefs of the old time. One felt that these young people were intensely aware of one another — but never once did they betray their interest by so much as a glance.

At the rear of the church was a high desk to which

the worshipers were forever tiptoeing. A quiet little man, with snowy hair, took the money they extended and gave them candles. These a gray-haired Indian of dignified mien placed in the candlesticks before the various saints.

The practice of offering candles to God in sorrow, joy, or petition is a very beautiful one when explained in the Russian way. The wax gathered by the bee is pure as it comes from the flowers. It typifies the purity of the heart which offers the gift. The light from the taper stands for the enlightenment of heart and mind; and the warmth of the flame for the love of God and neighbor.

2

The tourists at the door had finally decided to come in, and the little white-haired man was showing them to a bench kept exclusively for visitors. The tolling of the big bell, which had been vibrating the church, ceased suddenly, and the two-hour service began.

Instrumental music is not known in the Russian Orthodox Church, but behind a carved screen stood a choir of Indian boys and men. The leader was a tall Russian deacon, very handsome in his black cassock.

Father Andrew Kashevaroff, as visiting priest, officiated in splendid robes of crimson and gold. He came through the Royal Gates swinging his censer with the air of a conqueror serving his Lord with vigor and joy. With the incense rose his fine tenor voice, which was answered by the chorded harmony of the singers — harmony more stirring, more poignantly

beautiful than the tones of any organ I have ever heard: Indian tenors, high and clear and wistful as flute notes; Indian baritones, rich and mellow as the sound of distant surf; and the bass of the deacon rolling deep like summer thunder in the hills. All these blended in orisons that ran the gamut from muted symphonies to a swelling triumphant *jubilate.*

It was sacred music and in an ancient Slavonic tongue, yet it had in it something that was far removed from things ecclesiastic. Perhaps the plaintiveness of those tenors harked back to primitive times when the finest Thlinget singers petitioned the gods of the sea for food; perhaps in the baritones were tangled racial memories of the days when battle songs were chanted as the war canoes headed toward the village of the enemy. The peculiar beauty of it caught at my heart — although gossip had not allowed me to remain in ignorance of the fact that some of Sitka's most picturesque sinners were in the choir!

The Royal Gates swung open, revealing the blue-toned Sanctuary with its inlaid altar, and that famous cross of pearls made in Bethlehem, and containing, so 'tis said, a bit of the true Cross. Behind it, splendidly dazzling in the sunlight, hung a life-size ikon of Christ in gilded silver robes — a treasure sent from Petropavlosk, Siberia, where it had been mutilated in 1855 by the bayonets of the allied marine squadron making war on Russia.

While the choir chanted and Father Andrew continued the service, clouds of incense, symbolizing the prayers of the faithful, rose from the clinking censer

and was wafted out to the worshipers who finally rose from their knees and filed up to kiss the jeweled cross the priest held toward them.

At this point one of the tourists gave vent to a loud *Ha!*

Father Andrew wheeled, his flashing blue eyes impaling the offender.

'We welcome visitors, but there must be no jeering in the house of God,' he thundered. 'Those who wish may leave at once.'

No one moved. The service continued.

The sermon, based on the Golden Rule, was a friendly, intimate talk, such as a father might give his children. It was delivered first in English, and afterward in Thlinget. In his own parish at Juneau, Father Andrew preached in four languages, Thlinget, Russian, English, and Greek, because many of his parishioners there were of the cosmopolitan workers in the great gold mines of Juneau.

The service ended in a triumphant choral crescendo.

While the big bell tolled again the worshipers filed out into the street.

I sought the corner where the tourists, waiting to be shown the church, were gathered round a pedestal supporting a bell six feet in diameter. We were all inspecting it, when Father Andrew, divested of his robes, came from behind the *Ikonastas*. He was accompanied by the young resident priest. Both greeted us with Russian courtesy and Old-World bowings.

'You are seeing our latest historic treasure!' exclaimed Father Andrew, indicating the bell. 'It was

found but lately buried under the débris in the church cellar. It is the only bell left in Alaska of those cast in Sitka's foundries. See, I will translate the inscription for you!' He traced with his finger the quaint Slavonic characters raised about the rim:

This bell was cast on the American shores in the Fort of New Archangel, on the Island of Baranov of the Russian American Company, by the coppersmith Krimsky, in July of the eighteen hundred and eleventh year.

'All the other bells,' he continued, turning to us, 'were shipped south to the padres in New Spain — the California of to-day. Old manifests show as many as fifteen at one time sent to be traded to the Spaniards for wheat and tallow and hides.

'You know, those Spanish dons were of a delightful indolence! Their servants were still grinding wheat with the mortar and the pestle when our Russians had the flour mills operating here in Sitka. The hides from their cattle were tanned here, too, and made into shoes by Russian cobblers. Then the shoes were sold to the Californians! The tallow they traded to us was moulded here into candles, which gave light to Sitka homes, ladies and gentlemen, and beauty to the Russian altars you are looking at now. The surplus was sent back to the Spaniards to be burned on the Catholic altars in the missions of California! Was it not a friendly bit of commerce, a beautiful bit of trading?'

The ohs and ahs of wonderment from the tourists made the eyes of both priests flash with pride and pleasure.

'You did not know that?' exclaimed Father Andrew.

'Why, this whole cathedral is a monument to those old Russian days in America!' he continued, using his slim hands to emphasize his remarks. 'That was a blooming time of Russia in this land. Then this church was filled with people every Sunday — soldiers of the Siberian Line Battalion in their dark uniforms trimmed with red, the officers with their gold and silver epaulets, the ladies in their silks and cloaks of the finest furs! On the great holidays of Christmas and Easter this church could not hold them all, and many stood in the street! Then the service was conducted by the Bishop himself, assisted by two priests and two deacons — all in the robes of magnificence which you shall presently see. And the beautiful singing was performed by scores of students from the Russian seminary here. All the bells chimed every Sunday and echo carried the sound of them far away over the mountains. But' — Father Andrew sighed — 'those good days for the Church are passed away in Alaska. You saw our people to-day — but a handful.'

'And in Russia also,' quietly interposed the slender, sad-eyed young priest, who was recently from Moscow. 'These are sorrowful days for the Church, since the Bolsheviki rule.'

That no depression of feeling might come to us visitors, the two priests now hastily led us toward the main altar and began showing us the treasures of the cathedral.

Rich as any plunder of Sir Francis Drake were the objects spread before us: A book of the Scriptures in a wrought silver cover weighing twenty-seven pounds;

an enameled cross set with Siberian crystals; crosses of gold and silver and ivory studded with precious stones; vessels and chalices of pure silver set with fine enameled medallions; jeweled caskets; quaintly illumined testaments encased in precious metals and mother-of-pearl set with gems.

There was also regalia of highest ecclesiastical dignity — small, exquisite ikons of gold; mitres of cloth of gold; and a beautiful conical crown encrusted with amethysts, pearls, and rubies, with enameled medallions set in filigree. This last was the mitre of the great Metropolitan Innocent of Russia, who began his labors in Alaska as humble Father Ivan Veniaminov.

There were silver censers with delicate chains that tinkled at a touch; and the two old wedding crowns rich with Siberian jewels bordering a miniature of the Virgin on the bride's crown, and of Jesus on the groom's. These crowns are held over the heads of the bridal pair during the two-hour marriage ceremony of the Russians.

Dazzling robes of cloth of gold and of cloth of silver were brought out, also robes of heavy velvet and damask embroidered with gold. Some of these had been sent over to Alaska in colonial days by Russian royalty.

Treasured more than any gifts of royalty, however, is a set of vestments in cloth of silver and gold. It is used only on the great feast of Easter. Father Andrew held it out reverently so that its richness glowed in the sunlight. 'This,' he said, 'was presented by the man

who conquered the wildest, most beautiful land in the world not only for Russia, but for us who have come after. This is the gift of Alexander Andreevitch Baranov!

'But Baranov never worshiped in this church,' the priest went on, 'for it was not built until 1848 — almost thirty years after his death. I will tell you how it was: After the founding of Sitka, twelve years passed before the colonists had a church, although the employees of the company, in the absence of any ordained priest, performed baptismal and burial services. So you may imagine, my friends, with what eagerness they waited, those faithful ones of the old time, when they heard that the little sloop of war Neva was on its way with clergy and many costly gifts from the Emperor himself, for the establishing and maintaining of a church in wild, stockaded Sitka! How they must have watched in those days when it took a year — sometimes two years — for a vessel to make the trip around the Horn!

'At last there came a raw foggy day in January of the year 1813, when the lookout on the castle citadel sighted a strange rowboat crawling in between the islands like a wounded thing. At once Baranov sent a dozen armed bidarkas to escort the boat in, for the Thlingets were always ready to fall upon our people. Alas, when they are landed, Baranov's men lift from that boat a few Russian sailors half dead from cold and hunger; and the news spreads that the little gospel ship has gone down off the shore of Mount Edgecumbe — within sight of Sitka! [1]

[1] Of those on board thirty-eight perished, including the commander, the intended future manager of the company sent to relieve Baranov, and

'Ah, the sea swallowed a rich booty then, my friends. It took many brave souls! But see what happens' — Father Andrew's eyes and hands became animated. 'Like a miracle of ancient days the cruel breakers cast up on the beach the ikon of Saint Michael, the patron of Sitka's church! And Baranov went out with his men, gathered up what he could find of the Neva's wreckage, and used it in building his church, which was completed in 1816.

'Of course the chalices and vessels were made from Spanish silver by local mechanics; the altar cloths and priestly robes from Chinese silks.

'When the service, for the first time, was chanted by an ordained priest — ah, my friends, that was an event to be proud of! Baranov himself wrote back to Russia: "The mercy of the Almighty has not forsaken us in America. We have just finished a house of God. And above all radiates the ikon of Saint Michael!" That same ikon is radiating before you at this moment!' finished Father Andrew with a dramatic gesture toward the *Ikonastas* where the martial image stood forth in a splendor of burnished white metal.

As I gazed upon it, I thought how well Baranov had chosen a patron for his far-flung Northern settlement — Saint Michael the archangel, powerful leader of the heavenly host. The saint stood, virile, commanding,

five women passengers. In the cargo was food and clothing, the messages of the year for the exiles, in addition to rich vestments and furnishings for the church — all scattered for miles along the wild coast of Kruzof Island. It is said that Chief Katlean, of the Thlingets, tore his hair with rage when he learned of the wreck because he did not find and destroy the survivors. (C. L. Andrew's *Story of Sitka.*)

SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL
Rescued from the wreck of the Neva.

THE MADONNA OF KAZAN
For which $25,000 was refused.

in his armor of glittering silver, a halo raying vigorously from the plumes of his helmet, a sword and a shield in his hands. He was, indeed, a figure to inspire faith and confidence in the hearts of those Russian pioneers periled by sea and wilderness, and hourly threatened with starvation, capture, and torture by the never-sleeping savages camping in the shadow of the stockade. Not even the ocean had been mighty enough to prevent this symbol of the saint's presence from reaching its destination. But the churning of the waves after the shipwreck had entirely obliterated the painted ivory face.

'By the way, Father' — a big, prosperous-looking man with the tourist party broke a moment's awed silence — 'about how many dollars' worth of silver have you got tied up in these — er — um — representations?' A well-manicured hand indicated the ikons of the *Ikonastas*.

The light in Father Andrew's face gave place to a look of informative politeness as he delivered himself of the following estimate:

'For the twelve ikons you see there adorning our screen, my dear sir, over fifty pounds of solid silver were used. In the money of to-day it would be worth about six thousand dollars.' He turned quickly, for a lady with a large bust and an aggressive chin was attempting to squeeze through the Royal Gates. Almost as her fingers touched the bronzed portals, each priest had a detaining hand on her arm.

'Madame is not permitted to enter!' Father Andrew spoke with a smile.

The lady gave him an indignant look. 'I guess I paid fifty cents to see this church and I'm going to see all of it!' she declared, shoving herself forward.

'Pardon, Madame. But it is a rule of our Church that no woman shall enter the Sanctuary unless she is the Mother Superior of a convent, or unless she is past eighty years of age. And' — Father Andrew made his quaint bow — 'Madame, it is very evident, has many decades to live before that time.'

The lady, with no more ado, allowed the two Russians to hand her down the platform steps to the main floor of the cathedral, and all of us moved on to the left toward a smaller altar which is consecrated to the Mother of God. Here is enshrined the famous Lady of Kazan.

Ineffably lovely is this ikon — a very pearl of ecclesiastical beauty. Not only is every fold and pattern of the rich brocaded drapery about head and shoulders wrought in etched and beaten silver — an art in itself peculiarly Russian — but an inspired brush has produced on ivory the countenance of Mother and Child 'sweeter than the radiance of stars.' The Mother's dark eyes have a haunting tenderness that has been immortalized by more than one gifted writer.

Father Andrew was explaining to the aggressive lady: 'This ikon of the Virgin was presented by the working people of Sitka, Madame. It is our most beautiful treasure — a Madonna, so world-travelers have told us, whose loveliness equals, if not exceeds, that of any famous Madonna of the Old World.'

'How much did you say it was worth, Father?' asked the prosperous-looking man.

'I did not say,' replied the priest, with a twinkle in his eye. 'But we have refused twenty-five thousand dollars for it.'

'The deuce!' The prosperous-looking man stepped briskly to the ikon and regarded it with a new and respectful interest. We others followed our guide to the dim and blackened ikon of Our Lady of Smolensk.

'You may remember,' began Father Andrew, 'how the padres of California in their missions were obliged to preach from little overhanging pulpits with a door in the back, through which they could dodge to avoid the arrows which often marked those California savages' reception of the Holy Word? Well, my friends, I assure you those southern barbarians were lambs, doves of peace, compared with the Thlingets of old-time Sitka. The Russians of that day dared not allow the Indians to worship in Saint Michael's for fear they would fall upon the whites and massacre them during the service. But come here to this window —— You see back there on the hill a tall white cross? Yes? Well, there was built a little chapel just inside the stockade. It was the Church of the Holy Trinity — and built especially for the Thlingets. And what do those barbarians do? I will tell you:

'In 1855 they tunnel beneath the walls of the stockade, enter the little house of God, and turn it into a fort from which to shoot the Russians! Imagine them, fierce in war-paint and hideous battle masks, armed with muskets behind the log walls of the church, pick-

ing off the Russian officers and men hurrying through the streets of Sitka! Imagine them in masks donning the vestments of the priest, waving torches, and doing heathen dances about the church as they hacked with knives and hatchets the sacred altars and pictures! It was only when the batteries from the castle and the blockhouse blazed back at them that they surrendered. But by that time the church was defiled, ruined. Many of the ikons were cut to pieces. This — Our Lady of Smolensk, looked on that bloody time, and if you observe closely you can see the scars left by the Indian spears!'

3

After the tourists had been bowed from the cathedral, I lingered for a word with Father Andrew. 'You can't really blame the Thlingets for resenting the encroachments of the Russians, Father,' I said. 'The spoiler came taking their land, their furs, their women; he came forcing upon them his strange religion.'

'There is some truth in what you say, but attend! Since the beginning of time the white man has claimed all lands by right of discovery and conquest. Witness Balboa, in 1513, when he discovers the Pacific. What does the man do? Why, he rushes into the ocean to his middle, shouting that he claims for Spain everything in sight — earth, air, water. "For all time," says he, "past, present, or to come, without contradiction . . . north, south, with all the seas from the Pole Arctic to the Pole Antarctic, both now, and as long as the world endures, until the final day of judgment!"

Ha! The fellow omits only the heavens from his claims.

'Now, the Russians also, braving dangers of northern seas and lands, colonizing as they came south, might have claimed the land by right of discovery and conquest, had they wished; but no. In all cases they first approached the Thlinget, bargained with him for a place to live, and then paid him the price he asked. What happens? The Thlinget welcomes the Russian — *and all the time he is planning to exterminate him when the deal is completed!* You have only to read the old records to see how it was. Does not Lisiansky say, in his "Voyage Round the World": "The Thlingets are a shrewd and bold, though a perfidious, people. The toyons were often eloquent and . . . swore by their ancestors, by relatives living and dead, and called heaven, earth, the sun, moon, and stars to witness for them particularly when they meant to deceive." And it was conceded that the modern Hebrew would have little to teach those Indians in the arts of trade!

'As for his furs, the Thlinget was paid in useful things that made life easier and better for him — not with the whiskey the Yankee and English traders gave him to debauch him; not with firearms which he might use against the white man when on the warpath; not with diseases like those left him by the sailors from the South. As for women — what would you? The world over the dark-skinned female loves the white man, and the luxuries the white man can give her. No Thlinget woman was forced to come inside the stockade. Quite, quite the contrary.

'As for forcing religion on them,' continued Father Andrew earnestly, 'you are mistaken. Unlike the meek Aleuts, the Thlingets did not take kindly to the Word. "We don't know your God, and we don't want to know Him," they said. So the first concern was to show the savage how to combat disease — smallpox being their most terrible scourge. Veniaminov, our greatest missionary, studied their language and waited until they were ready to embrace religion voluntarily. He never forced his doctrine upon them, neither did he make them presents or promises. Indeed, after he had labored ten years among them there were only twenty Thlingets who had become Christians!'

In the first days of the settlement, however, when the employees of the company were performing baptismal services, the wily Thlingets *did* come to be baptized because of the presents of food and clothing they received. Baranov, himself, stood godfather to them. I have read in the old archives that whenever a native was christened he was presented with a calico shirt, some leaf tobacco, and a clasp knife, for which Baranov reimbursed the mission fund. In case of a woman convert, a piece of calico was substituted for the shirt, and some needles for the knife.

The following is copied from a yellowed list of baptisms recorded at that time:

August 24, 1808. By the grace of God twenty-one pagans were admitted to the Orthodox Church to-day with great ceremony in the presence of Mr. Baranov, Chief Manager of the Colonies, his Chiefs of Bureaus and officers of the Imperial Navy who acted as godfathers.

A marginal note naïvely states:

> The baptismal presents on this occasion were furnished from the store of the Russian American Company, and Mr. Baranov donated twenty-one silver rubles to the Mission Fund. Three of the persons baptized this day were found to have been Christians over two years. They were made to return their presents.

What a picture those words call to mind — a strange picture of ecclesiastical pomp, of official ceremony, of barbaric Thlinget splendor, swinging censers, perfume of incense, Indian braves in beads, headdresses, and blankets, sponsored by uniformed officers and civilian dandies dressed in the fashion that prevailed when Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States!

After Father Andrew and I had discussed these old baptismal ways, we left the lower part of the church and climbed the narrow winding stairway that leads to the belfry. The hewed logs of which the church is made showed plainly on the inside, and halfway up we stopped to look at the wrought iron works of the great tower-clock, which was made by Father Ivan Veniaminov. Although the belfry has a lean to it, the clock still keeps good time.

As we ascended, Father Andrew told me of his two little nieces who, one evening years ago, were accidentally locked in the church after vespers. While all of Sitka was out fearfully searching forest and lakes, because of the lurking Thlinget enemy, the two children, too small to climb up to the windows to make themselves heard, were spending hours of terror in the darkened cathedral. They finally found their way to

the tower stairs, and crawled step by step to the belfry. They were tall enough to reach the bell-ropes, and when the bells began to toll at that unheard-of hour of the night, many of the searchers attributed the sounds to supernatural causes; but the children's father, who was also the resident priest, rushed joyfully back to the church and rescued his lost babies.

When we reached the tower I curled up on the great cross-beam worn smooth by the ringers who for eighty years have sat there to summon Sitka to prayer. Father Andrew, who had duties below, left me to spend as much time as I liked looking out over the dreamy, idyllic old town, where every vista suggests a romance or a tragedy of a bygone time.

A little wind, with the breath of mountain hemlock in it, blew through the bell-hung niches, bringing to my mind, for some reason, the strange story of Feodor Bashmakoff, the Thlinget priest, who was sent from Sitka to Irkutsk to be tried there by the higher Russian clergy for sorcery. In the stained old records of a hundred years ago I have read the charges against him:

> Feodor Bashmakoff was seen by competent witnesses in the act of assisting at certain pagan rites intended to effect the cure of a sick native. He was heard to join in an incantation to pagan idols, and seen to go through certain motions and steps employed by pagan shamans, or sorcerers, in the service of Satan. . . . He at various times desecrated an orthodox shrine by dipping pagan charms, such as sorcerers sell to the benighted natives, into holy water blessed by the benediction of a priest.

Brought to trial in far-away Siberia, the accused

young priest admitted that all this was true, but, said he, he had acted under the conviction that to introduce the prayers of the Church among the pagans at any time and by any means would be a step toward the conversion of his tribe. He had sprinkled the man whom he thought to be dying with holy water because it would do his soul good and induce some of the Indian spectators to be baptized! He had dipped the pagan charms in holy water expecting not only to destroy the 'influence of the Devil' adhering to them, but also to sow the seeds of Christianity among his people!

Poor bewildered Indian, trying to understand the white man's religion! What an earnest and pathetic figure he must have appeared to the higher Russian clergy! Their verdict speaks well for their understanding and leniency, because they decided that he had sinned more from ignorance than from malice or wickedness of soul.

He was severely reprimanded, and set free to return to his Alaskan home, but so deeply was his simple heart pierced by the realization of his mistake that he voluntarily entered a bleak monastery in an inland town of Siberia, to atone for his unwitting sin by a life of eternal seclusion and exile.

What exile meant to Feodor the Thlinget, I realized as I looked out from the tower of Saint Michael's on that summer sky, at the floating clouds, the fresh green forests. Below were the red roofs and the sparkling bay with barricades of small islands sheltering Sitka from the tumult of the North Pacific. A canoe glided along,

sunlight playing on the paddles of the laughing natives. Blue rose the timbered slopes of Verstovia, and ivory were the peaks of the rage beyond. Away to the west over the white crater of Edgecumbe silver clouds sailed off toward Asia, free as the wind that stirred the bell-ropes about me. All this had been home to Feodor.

I could picture him over there in Siberia — a slim, tall Indian in a cassock, standing with his dark face pressed against the tiny window of his cloister cell, his bewildered brown eyes gazing toward Alaska, his wild young heart breaking with longing for the freedom of his native land.

He did not live long — Feodor the pagan Thlinget, who aspired to be a priest to the white man's God.

CHAPTER IX

I

'Hoo HOO! We're invited to Peter Kermakov's for tea!'

From the kitchen stoop of the Erler I waved the invitation to Kay, who was now my roommate at Mrs. Taylor's. Kay was in the back yard sitting on the grass under a raspberry hedge, extracting the meat of a crab from its shell. Her morning garb consisted of a disreputable pair of khaki trousers, a deep blue silk shirt with bobbed sleeves, and her own unbound hair which fell in golden waves about her shoulders. She made such a picture in the sunshine that I didn't wonder that half the men in town were already in love with her, and that the young foreman of the crab cannery presented her each morning with the prize crustacean of his catch.

'Three thousand rousing cheers!' she exclaimed, brandishing a crab leg. 'It almost compensates for the total disappearance of the Father of Pictures.'

That exasperating man was never far from our thoughts, for, despite our shameless pursuit of him, we had not yet been able to interview him. And village rumor now had it that the artist-recluse had gone off to the glaciers to study color.

But an invitation from Peter Kermakov — that was an event! It was seldom that members of the old Russian families invited strangers to their homes. Mr.

Kermakov was the quiet little white-haired warden of Saint Michael's Cathedral, whom I had seen handing out the candles on Sunday. His father had been agent for the Russian American Company at Kodiak in the days of the Czar's régime, and Mr. Peter lived just off one of the erratic angles of Governor's Walk in the home that had been given his mother by the Russian Government. It was visible above the trees and shrubbery of its garden — a rambling log house, which for days had lured me with glimpses of its high door sill and tiny swinging windows filled with flowering plants.

Peter Kermakov, bowing very low and murmuring charming speeches of welcome, met us on his doorstep, and conducted us to his drawing-room, which has seen all that was best of Sitka's social life.

The large room was faintly scented with the perfume of apple trees blossoming outside the open windows. The thick maroon carpet was squared with patches of sunshine that made high lights on old mahogany and rosewood furniture, and on the swinging brass *lampada* before an ikon in the east corner. Seated at a table near the tiled *golandka* was a lady busy with a samovar. Since Peter Kermakov was a widower, I knew she must be a friend he had asked in to be hostess for the afternoon. As we entered, she looked up and smiled, a tiny alert old lady in a high-backed chair, with her feet on a hassock. A heavy ivory silk shawl, embroidered in vivid colors that had faded with years, had slipped from her shoulders and draped itself effectively over both arms of her chair.

We were presented to Madame Legia Artamonova,

who was a 'citizen by purchase,' having been born in the Territory before it became American. Although her face was lined and her hair snow white, she had a delightful way with her little beringed hands, and about her was that indefinable poise that clings to a woman to whom many men have paid court.

When she learned that we were much interested in Sitka's colonial past, Madame's eyes lighted. She was eager to talk of those days. 'Alaska has never since known such a splendor!' she exclaimed, lifting her chin proudly. And I knew suddenly that though she had for over sixty years been a citizen of the United States — by purchase — her heart was still the heart of a Russian.

'You see,' she continued in her soft, faintly accented English, 'my aunt was married to an official of the Russian American Company at Kodiak, and an uncle of mine was captain on one of the ships in the fleet of commerce, so it was not difficult for me to travel when I was a girl. Thus I saw many things, both here and in Kodiak. But, oh! It was when I came down to Sitka to go to school that I had so beautiful a time! There were four very fine schools here then — one for the sons of officers and one for the daughters. Also there were the same for people who were not of the nobility and gentry.

'That was in the time when Prince Dmitri Maksoutov was Governor of all Russian America. That was before the Americans came. I was fifteen years old, but already I was attending the balls at the castle. Oh, how my heart beats when I remember those wonderful

days!' Madame clasped her tiny hands. Her dark eyes glowed.

'On winter nights when the castle was *en fête*, lights were shining from every window out onto the snow, and the long stairway that led up from Governor's Walk to the castle on the Keekor — it was like a picture! Like a fairyland it was, with the Russian officers escorting us ladies up the stairs.

'And those officers! They were of such a manhood! So tall, so straight, so handsome in their dark uniforms with what you call epaulets of gold on the shoulders, and buttons of gold. And the doctors with silver epaulets and silver buttons. And all with decorations on the breast, for they were of high rank back in Russia!' Madame's eloquent eyes and hands supplemented her words to make her memories come alive for us.

'And we ladies — shall I tell you how we were dressed? Décollétés, in silks and satins and velvets so beautiful, with the wide swinging skirts and the cloaks of sable and ermine. And all of us talking and laughing back at the ones below on the stairway. All of us so happy on that old stairway!

'And the nights — they were of blue crystal, with the islands and the stars reflected in the Bay. Stars were bigger and brighter than they are to-day. And the Northern Lights —— But I have no words to tell you how lovely, how whispering close they were above the white mountains!

'Sometimes we'd stop on the steps to look down at Sitka lying below us — Russian Sitka with great

PRINCE DIMITRI MAKSOUTOV
Last Russian Governor.

PRINCESS MAKSOUTOVA
Second wife of Prince Maksoutov.

squared-log houses, walls painted dull yellow, roofs painted red, and the Cathedral of Saint Michael with its emerald spires sharp against the dark evergreen hills! All, all sparkling under frost in the starlight!

'Then, behold we are come to the top of the hill and are before the entrance of the castle! The big doors are opened for us by the servants, and we all go up to the second story where is the ballroom. And in the small boudoir opening from it, we ladies lay aside our furs. Then we come out again.

'There to greet us stand Prince Maksoutov and his Princess. How we of Sitka love them! He so pleasant, so manly. She so friendly, so beautiful. She has, like all Russian ladies of that time who are married, the little cap on her dark hair. And when she smiles — ah, her teeth are like the pearls about her throat! Never was so gracious a princess, or one so democratic. She would dance with every man from the highest to the lowest in rank. And the Prince would lead out every lady to dance once during the evening.

'The ballroom? It was magnificent! All about the walls were cedar panels, and mirrors from Russia that doubled the hundreds of candles in the brass chandeliers. The splendid portraits of the Emperor and Empress — it was Alexander II who ruled Russia and Alaska then! The corner for the golden ikon and the *lampada*, all bright and shining! The silken red draperies, the heavy carved furniture that came all the way from St. Petersburg — oh, truly it was of a splendor!

'Now, the servants pass with trays — little cakes, sips of wine, a bit of caviar. Or, for those who wish,

the steaming samovar in the small drawing-room to one side. After that — ah, the music!' Madame clasped her hands on her breast and swayed her little body. 'The music of guitars, violins, and piano — beautiful, entrancing! And the strong arms of officers to hold one in the dance! We have lancers, the polka, the waltz in those days. And how the silken gowns of the ladies sway above their slippered feet! How gay the laughing, the whispering, the love making! And how bright the lights streaming from the castle windows to the sea!

'Sometimes, on such a night, a supply ship would come in across the harbor, and the captain and his officers would come quickly tramping, tramping up the steps of the Keekor. Come quickly tramping into the castle and up the stairs to the ballroom. "Oh!" they would cry, "you Russian ladies make a light on the whole Pacific Ocean!"

'And then we would all gather about them while they told us the news from far lands. For it was a glorious time when a supply ship came in. It took one year from Europe round the Horn to Sitka in those days, and it always seemed like a crown to the happiness of the night when the captain and his officers joined us at a castle ball.'

'And after Alaska was sold to the United States — did the Americans give balls at the castle?' I asked.

Madame's face lost some of its animation. 'Yes,' she said. 'Yes . . . a few. I remember the first night when Sitka is Russian no more. The Americans have a celebration. General Jefferson Davis, who is in command,

and Mrs. Davis give a great ball at the castle. I go. It is a rainy night in October — quiet rain with no wind. The stairway up to the castle is wet and all the elderberry bushes on each side are dripping.

'When I enter the ballroom after laying aside my wraps, my heart is like tears. I see standing to receive us the General and Mrs. Davis, and in the background, like guests, are the Prince and the Princess. She has taken off her little cap and she has arranged her hair after the American fashion, with curls hanging down the sides. We Russian ladies — it makes us very sad. But' — Madame shrugged and made a gesture with both little hands — 'but the American ladies, they are dressed very beautifully. And in a few days we all are doing our hair like theirs.

'The ceremony when Alaska was transferred to the United States? Oh, yes, I remember that day. The eighteenth day of October of the year 1867 — a terrible day for Sitka. Many of us could not believe what was happening. Our country sold to foreigners! Soldiers in strange uniforms in our village talking their harsh foreign tongue! Carrying their strange striped flag through our streets! And that flag flying from their ships in our harbor! Those ships — I shall always remember their names: Ossipee, Jamestown, Resaca. Ah-h-h, there was much weeping and sorrow among our people that day. Even the Thlingets were sad.

'And all that morning we watched our Czar's flag flying from the tall staff in front of the castle — where you see that white marble shaft to-day. We watched it,

because they told us it was the last time the flag of Russia should float over Sitka. It was a rainy day in October. Most melancholy. And in the afternoon a company of our soldiers in full dress uniform marched up before the castle, under command of Captain Pestchourov. They took a place on the left of the flagstaff. And then the American soldiers marched up and took the place on the right. Because of the rain Princess Maksoutova and some other Russian ladies looked down from the castle windows. The Indian chiefs in their war canoes watched from the water below the Keekor.

'Then slowly the Russian flag began to come down. Slowly . . . slowly. The American ship Ossipee set off guns, pealing, crashing, echoing through the hills, so one could not hear the sobs of the Russians. The Russian battery on the wharf was answering when — behold! The flag of our Emperor has whipped itself about the ropes! Close, close it clings high up on the staff! It will not come down! No, not even when they jerk on the ropes! Instead it rips its border clear, and there it waves free, free in the wind and the rain!

'Yet — it is only for a little while. A soldier is hoisted aloft and he detaches it. He does not hear the calls of Captain Pestchourov to bring the flag down in his hand. He drops it. And the banner of our country falls on the bayonet points of our Russian soldiers.

'There is a moment when no one speaks. Then the foreigners' Stars and Stripes ascends to the top of the staff. Captain Pestchourov steps up to the American representative and says: "By authority from His

Majesty, Emperor of all the Russias, I transfer to the United States the Territory of Alaska!"

'Americans cheer. Russians weep. The Princess bows her head on her arms in the window and sobs. And it rains . . . rains.' Madame pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

'Ah, that is a sad time,' she continued, when we begged her to go on. 'All Russians are heartbroken. Many of them do not want to live under the new flag and become citizens of the new country, so they are preparing to go to Russia. And yet they are desolated at leaving their homes in Sitka where they have been born. Some have not the money to leave, and so they have to stay and become Americans.

'Then comes a time of much — what you call commerce. The Americans are very alert, very rushing. They want to make much business. They mark up the land into lots, and they sell real estate. They want to buy and sell everything.

'They like furs and are eager to possess the fur mantles of our Russian ladies who are going back to Russia. We are not yet familiar with the new United States money, so an American soldier bought the sable cloak of my aunt, and paid her three dollars in American money.

'Myself? Oh, after the transfer it is very lonely for me in Sitka. All my friends are gone. All the officers are gone. My father is at Kodiak, so I go back there to him.'

'And then, Madame? What happened to you then?' I was eager to know.

Madame smiled, shrugged. 'The Bishop of the Russian Church is there in Kodiak. He has a son. The Bishop sees me and he thinks I will make a good wife for his son. . . . I do not care. . . . There is a Russian officer who is gone ——' Madame's low voice broke, and suddenly she looked every one of her seventy-seven years.

She was silent a moment. Then she shook herself gently and straightened her gallant little shoulders. 'And so I marry!' she finished with a gay gesture. 'And when I come back to Sitka again . . . it is all American. All American.'

'Did you find it much changed, Madame?' asked Kay.

Madame Artamonova smiled a bit ruefully. 'Yes. It is under the military rule of the United States then. And you see the soldiers and the Russians do not understand one another. No more do the Thlingets understand those American soldiers. We invite them to our homes to entertain them, and those foreign men insult us women as if we are squaws. We do not dare to go out on the streets after nightfall, for they mistake our purpose. They commit great rudeness.

'They also rob our Church of Saint Michael. And there is much outrage going on with the Indians. A distressing time it was for us. Then, when Sitka has been American for ten years, the troops are withdrawn. Oh, how we rejoice to get rid of those soldiers, though, of course, we fear the Thlingets. Sitka is left in charge of the customs collector and the postmaster, but they have no real authority. So we think, of course, that

the men at Washington will soon send us a more pleasant form of government, and some protection from the Indians. We are Americans now, and we must not look to the Czar for protection any more.

'Soon the Indians are rehearsing their wrongs at the hands of those American soldiers who are gone. There is much making of speeches and they all become inflamed with the desire to kill off the whites. We hear that the bloodthirsty chief, Kat-lee-an, is planning to sack Sitka, kill all the men, and make slaves of the women. And we are helpless.

'We send petitions to Washington, but we get no answer.

'Meanwhile the Indians are becoming very bold. They say the Americans have abandoned Alaska and it belongs to them again. They begin to tear down the stockade and carry the doors and windows away from our empty buildings. Then we hear that Kat-lee-an is preparing a great feast before he begins his massacre. We talk of petitioning the Czar, but — the Czar is far away. So we send instead a petition to the English Government at Victoria, British Columbia. Then, while we wait to hear, we prepare for the siege.

'All the Russian women and children are barricaded in the House of the Bishops. All the American women and children are in the Customs House, which is the Post Office to-day. Every man and boy is armed and watching. From our windows we can see the Indians dancing boldly through our streets in blankets and war bonnets and death masks. Oh, how we long for the protection of our Czar then! We worry. We wait for

the American man-of-war to come to our rescue. We cannot believe that our new Government will ignore our peril.

'We pray. But the man-of-war does not come. The days go by. Kat-lee-an, remembering the firm rule of Russia, and the payment always demanded when the Thlingets took Russian lives, has to work up his courage to attack white people. But one day we learn that he is to attack that night. Oh, the terror and the praying in Sitka that day!

'But before night comes we hear the whistle of a vessel. "We are saved! The Americans have come! We are saved!" we cry. And there in the House of the Bishops we are all shouting and clasping one another and laughing and weeping for joy.

'But . . . it is not the American man-of-war. It is the British war vessel Osprey that has answered our call for help from Victoria. She trains her guns on the Indian village, and the Thlingets, remembering the guns of Lisiansky's Neva, sue for peace.'

'When did the American gunboat arrive?' asked Kay.

Madame smiled wearily. 'It didn't arrive,' she answered. 'But after the English had broken the siege for us, the American Government grew ashamed. Later they sent us naval protection. After that better times began for Sitka.'

'Yes,' said Kay, 'I've heard some of the old-timers tell about Alaska's naval protection. It consisted of the Jamestown, didn't it? An old sailing vessel which, with its captain, marines, and sailors, took the place of the

soldiers. It was towed up from San Francisco, and once anchored here in Sitka Harbor, it was unable to move unless they first sent down to San Francisco by the monthly steamer for a tug to tow it!'

2

While Madame had been telling us of the Americanization of Alaska, Peter Kermakov had tiptoed out of the room. Now he returned bearing a copper tray on which were a plate of thin bread-and-butter sandwiches, and a fat little pot of rose-leaf conserve. This delicious sweet, which I have never seen outside the homes of Russian Alaskans, was served in our tea, which Madame brewed and poured for us. We women had ours in delicate china cups that had been a present to our host's mother from Princess Maksoutova. But Mr. Peter had his in a glass set in a silver holder.

Madame had just finished telling us how she used to gather wild rose petals and, following a Persian recipe, prepare them for conserve, when a shadow appeared in the doorway. We looked up to see Father Andrew Kashevaroff, looking very jolly and comfortable in a blue flannel shirt and khakis. He greeted us with his customary cheeriness. 'I suppose, Peter Petrovitch, that you have been monopolizing the conversation, as usual!' he said, his blue eyes twinkling at the quiet little man who had hardly opened his mouth. Mr. Peter smiled shyly and with his courtly bow presented the sandwiches to Kay.

'I'm the one responsible for Peter's reticence,' continued Father Andrew. 'We were babies together. We

were boys together. And now we're growing old together — and I've always loved the sound of my own voice so much that I've never given him a chance to talk.'

At this Madame Artamonova and the priest began an interchange of repartee that had to do with their childhood spent in old Kodiak, and though Father Andrew was some ten years her junior he was able to tell delightful incidents of those days when Madame was a hoop-skirted belle and the toast of the west coast of Alaska.

'Ah-h-h!' came the quiet voice of Peter Petrovitch at the end of one of those reminiscences. 'My heart is singing yet when I remember the beauty of Madame on her wedding day!'

Presently the talk turned to the distinguished brother of Peter Kermakov — Father Sergius. From the wall above a rosewood cabinet his portrait dominated the room — a serene-faced man with soft eyes, painted in the rich vestments of an arch-priest. Father Sergius, a linguist of ability and a man of rare diplomacy, was the interpreter between the Russians, the Thlingets, and the Americans during the parlous times that followed the transfer. He was, perhaps, one of the most important and useful citizens acquired by the United States at that time. Not only did he render valuable services to his adopted country, but his work in the Russian Church was such that he was honored by the Holy Synod, and twice honored by the last Czar of Russia, who presented him with the decoration of the Order of Saint Daniel, and, just before the Revo-

lution, with a beautiful loving cup which is now the most cherished heirloom in the Kermakov family.

Peter Petrovitch had again slipped from the room while Father Andrew told us of these events. Just as I was wishing that I might see the goblet of the Czar, he returned bearing the gift in its velvet-lined case of fine wood.

It was a massive foreign-looking thing of silver, two feet tall, with the double eagle done in bas-relief on the lid. With it was a document in Russian, which Peter Petrovitch unrolled and read to us. It said, in substance, that the cup was presented by 'His Imperial Majesty, Nicholas the Second, Emperor of all the Russias, Czar of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., etc., etc.,' to Sergius Kermakov of Saint Michael's Cathedral, and that the royal gift must never be sold or mortgaged.

The goblet of the Czar! A personal gift from the Emperor to a remote Russian churchman who was a citizen 'by purchase' of another country! But so have all the rulers of Russia kept a kindly eye on Alaska, ever since the days when the great Catherine sent her 'eaglets' to colonize this Northern land. Gazing at the shining cup, I was suddenly touched by this proof that the last unhappy Nicholas had, even in the midst of his political travail, upheld the tradition of his predecessors. This paternal attitude of Russian royalty explains why, in every Russian Alaskan home to-day, you'll find, beneath the picture of the President of our United States, a framed photograph of the late Czar and Czarina.

But now Madame Artamonova was speaking. She was recalling birthdays and name-days that were celebrated at the Kermakov home during the lifetime of Father Sergius. Then, said she, the loving cup was always filled with champagne and passed from guest to guest with speeches and much merrymaking. Listening to her recital we too became gay, and when Peter Petrovitch returned from one of his quiet forays and poured two bottles of ginger ale into the cup, we passed it from one to another. Father Andrew and Peter Petrovitch made graceful little speeches, and as usual we ended our ceremony by drinking toasts to those Russians who blazed the trails of civilization in Alaska — Shelikhov, Baranov, and Rezanov.

'Rezanov!' exclaimed Kay. 'How odd to hear of him way up here in the North! I'm from San Francisco, and you know the story of his love for Concha de Arguëllo, the daughter of the Spanish *comandante* there in the old days, is our most cherished and picturesque tradition.' She quoted:

Looking seaward, o'er the sandhills stands the fortress, old and quaint,
By the San Francisco friars lifted to their patron saint.
Count von Resanoff, the Russian, envoy of the mighty Czar,
Stood beside the deep embrasures, where the brazen cannon are.
He from grave provincial magnates oft had turned to talk apart
With the Comandante's daughter on the questions of the heart.

'Why, I was raised on that old poem of Bret Harte. And I made a special pilgrimage out to the Mission Dolores once to see the spot where the Roman Catholic priests raised such a row because Concha was deter-

GRIGORY SHELIKHOV
Founder of the Russian colonies.

COUNT NICOLAI REZANOV
Chamberlain of the Czar.

mined to marry the "heretic" — which wasn't exactly a nice way to label a nobleman and a member of the Russian Orthodox Church; though, of course, the Russians had exactly the same opinion of Concha.'

I spoke hastily to forestall any further religious observations Kay might make. 'Tell us how he looked, Father Andrew, this historic lover, His Excellency Count Nicolai Rezanov, Privy Counsellor and Grand Chamberlain, Ambassador to the Court of Japan, Plenipotentiary of the Russian American Company, Imperial Inspector of the extreme eastern and northwestern American dominions of His Imperial Majesty, Alexander the First, Emperor of all the Russias!' I stopped for breath after rolling all these titles on my tongue. 'Was he really the grand seigneur, the haughty and handsome nobleman of song and story?'

'Is it possible that you, an Alaskan, have never seen his portrait?' Father Andrew turned from me to Peter Kermakov, his blue eyes wide. 'Peter Petrovitch — think of that!'

While the two were considering my astonishing lack of education in this matter, Madame spoke: 'Why not take the young ladies to the House of the Bishops and let them look upon the portrait of Count Nicolai.'

The House of the Bishops, I remembered, was the place where outsiders were never allowed. I had not dreamed to encounter such good fortune. But my pleasure was somewhat lessened because neither Peter Kermakov nor Madame Artamonova would accompany us.

'You will be so good as to excuse me, my dear,' said

the little old lady, looking up at me while she stroked my hand. 'It was in the House of the Bishops that we withstood the siege of Sitka, and though that was many, many years ago the memory of it is like yesterday.'

3

When Father Andrew, Kay, and I turned in between the two silver spruce trees that marked the entrance to our destination, Father Andrew pointed out that the House of the Bishops was unrelieved in its severity except by a double row of narrow high windows. 'But in the old days,' he said, 'a veranda ran the whole length of it. That has been gone many years. Though the building was made of the finest, most well-seasoned logs, it is being allowed to fall into decay. Only a part of it now is habitable. The resident priest lives here.'

'I heard that in the days of the naval régime in Alaska there was a glassed-in portion of the veranda that was a conservatory,' remarked Kay. 'And they say that the American doctor lived near by, and that his beautiful young wife, dressed in her bathing-suit, used to run down from her house to the beach each day for a dip in the sea. And each day the Bishop, who was young also, would walk back and forth in his conservatory watching her, until all Sitka knew that he was in love with her and ——'

'Now, now, now, my dear young lady!' interrupted Father Andrew in some haste. 'I'm afraid some one has been giving you the ear full.'

'But you lived in Sitka then, Father.' Kay would not

be silenced. 'You must remember the young wife of the doctor?'

'Um-m-m-ph — I —— Well, I was a little boy then,' admitted the priest. 'And I —— Yes, I do remember that she was of a loveliness. But no matter now. Here we are at the doorway. I will summon Father Pontaliev.'

The young priest I had seen in the church on Sunday now admitted us, welcomed us, and told us he would be delighted to show us about.

We ascended a dusky, wide stairway to the upper story and were taken directly to the famous small chapel where all the Bishops of Alaska, beginning with the greatest one, Father Veniaminov, have held family service. Services are now held there during the fishing season when most of the Indian parishioners are away at the canneries.

The altar is beautifully decorated, and the chapel contains some ecclesiastical treasures presented by wealthy merchants of Moscow to Father Ivan Veniaminov, who built the House of the Bishops for himself in 1842. Among the prized relics of former days is a Gospel which Count Nicolai Rezanov presented to the Fort Ross Colony in California. When Fort Ross was sold to John Sutter in 1841, this was brought back to Sitka.

Father Veniaminov's office is kept just as it was in the great missionary's lifetime. His desk, which he himself made of yellow cedar, is a magnificent piece of work, and Father Andrew, like a delighted little boy, showed us how to press hidden buttons that opened se-

cret drawers. The walls of the room were lined with old Russian books, the faint smell of which pervaded the sunny atmosphere. A small, exquisite clock, which is also the work of the noted Veniaminov, ticked away on the desk. As we looked at it, its sweet chime tinkled the hour of the afternoon.

In one corner stood a chest made of yellow cedar, covered with the sleek, spotted fur of the leopard seal. The edges were heavily bound with hand-beaten copper, and the lid, inside of which were pasted pictures of saints, was further embellished by large ornamental hinges of beaten copper. This was the traveling trunk used by Father Veniaminov on his trip round the world. It had known the tropic ports of Tahiti, Honolulu, and Rio de Janeiro. What a picture he must have made, that virile, magnetic missionary, who afterward became Metropolitan Innocent of Russia—six feet three, white-bearded, straight as an arrow, striding along in his black traveling robes, while behind him came his dusky Aleut servants bearing this semi-barbaric chest!

The drawing-room, which we entered next, was fully eighty feet long. On one side a number of high narrow windows admitted subdued sunlight. At each end was a white-tiled *golandka*, the Russian stove which looks like a fireplace with no opening. The floor was covered with a deep-piled maroon carpet that was dotted with rugs of black and grizzly bears. There was an old organ, many intimate portraits of Czars and Czarinas, and in one corner the inevitable ikon of the Virgin with a *lampada* before it. The chairs and settees,

beautiful examples of the cabinet-maker's art, were of yellow cedar, satin-smooth and amber-toned with age. They, too, had been made by Veniaminov, whose favorite pastime was the making of clocks and furniture.

In this great room, typical of the Russian period in Alaska, one felt the mysterious charm that has sifted down not only from Sitka's colonial days, but also from the days of the American naval occupation. For it was here that the gay receptions were held after the Yankees had looted the log castle on the Keekor and allowed it to fall into ruin.

On one wall hung large portraits of George Washington, Nicholas II of Russia, Lincoln, and Roosevelt — all in a row. On the opposite wall were the three portraits we had come to see.

There was Grigory Shelikhov, who established the great Russian American Company in Alaska, and the first white settlement in 1784. Shelikhov, gentleman-trader, gentleman-explorer, gentleman-evangelist, whom Catherine the Great honored with a monument that now stands in a monastery cemetery in Irkutsk, Siberia. A Siberian friend of mine describes it as a beautiful thing of gray marble which tells in relief figures of white the whole story of the colonization of Russian America. The figures represent maps of Alaska and Siberia as shown on eighteenth-century charts. Also navigators' instruments, and the three ships of Shelikhov: Three Saints, The Archangel Michael, and Simeon the Friend of God and Anna the Prophetess!

The ships do not take up as much space as their

names might indicate, and the ambitious sculptor, who was the best of his day, also shows the three thousand natives which Shelikhov was reported to have baptized at one time in Kodiak! About the base of the monument is a long declamatory poem written by Catherine's court poet. It tells how Shelikhov discovered the Aleutian Indians, and calls on posterity to remember and honor always their countryman who made himself famous in Farthest East Alaska!

But at the time my Irkutsk friend fled from her city during the recent revolution, Shelikhov's monument was falling into ruin because vigorous plants had been permitted to grow up under the marble and crack it.

It was with these facts in mind that I studied the pictured Shelikhov smiling on the wall above me. He was a plump man in the costume and wig of George Washington's day. He was withal decidedly good-looking, with a merry eye, a tipped-up nose, and a dashing set of the head. He had a sword at his side and a long spyglass under his arm. He was just the kind of man who would send word back to his patroness, Catherine the Great, that he'd baptized three thousand heathen at one time — and really believe that he had!

Beside the debonair Grigory hung the portrait of Alexander Baranov. He was leaning over his desk, pen in hand, his watching eyes looking straight into mine. His decorations of nobility were displayed on the breast of his severe coat. Baranov was bald, and indifferent enough to it to be painted without the embellishing wig of his time, which would have concealed this fact from

posterity. But one does not notice the absence of hair because of the compelling power and beauty of the Iron Governor's blue eyes. 'He always wore a shirt of chain mail under his coat,' Father Andrew said. 'This bit of armor was found recently in the lodge of an ancient Thlinget, and was sent to the Smithsonian Institution.'

'Well,' came the musical voice of Kay at this moment, 'it's easy to see why the Doña Concha de Arguëllo fell for Nicolai!' She was standing before Rezanov's portrait eying it approvingly. The courtier looked out from his frame, lean, elegant in his splendid uniform, glittering orders on his breast, a cocked hat under his arm. Above a high Napoleonic stock rose his handsome patrician face. His fair hair was short and very thick, his narrowed eyes cold and blue as glacier ice, his chin arrogant, his mouth finely moulded and sardonic. But the artist had caught an expression of the lips, a mere hint of that beguiling Rezanov smile before which it is said even the jealous Spanish dons 'melted like women.'

'I can quite believe that his reputation as a lover has not been exaggerated,' continued Kay, her flippancy now vanished. 'I don't wonder that the little dark-haired Concha became a nun when she learned that he had died on the way to St. Petersburg to obtain his Czar's permission to marry her. I don't wonder that she was true to his memory all her life.'

She paused a moment, studying the high-bred face above her. 'Nicolai Rezanov, do you know what happened to the little Spanish girl you left in Cali-

fornia?' Then in that flexible voice of hers that she could make touch the heart like the *vox humana* tones of an organ, she began:

Far and near the people gathered to the costly banquet set,
And exchanged congratulations with an English baronet;

Till, the formal speeches ended, and amidst the laugh and wine,
Some one spoke of Concha's lover — heedless of the warning sign.

Quickly then cried Sir George Simpson: 'Speak no ill of him, I pray!
He is dead. He died, poor fellow, forty years ago this day —

'Died while speeding home to Russia, falling from a fractious horse.
Left a sweetheart, too, they tell me. Married, I suppose, of course.

'Lives she yet?' A deathlike silence fell on banquet, guests, and hall,
And a trembling figure rising fixed the awestruck gaze of all.

Two black eyes in darkened orbits gleamed beneath the nun's white hood;
Black serge hid the wasted figure, bowed and stricken where it stood.

'Lives she yet?' Sir George repeated. All were hushed as Concha drew
Closer yet her nun's attire. 'Señor, pardon, she died, too.'

CHAPTER X

I

In Sitka, when it's June, one balmy, idyllic day merges imperceptibly into another. Clocks and calendars fade from memory. World events, which reach the village each evening by cable and radio, become matters of no importance, of indifference. You surrender completely to the lulling spell of this Village-of-Lots-of-Time.

Like the leisurely Thlingets, you fall into the habit of loafing along in the sunshine, doing nothing, going nowhere. Your lazy eye follows the shadow of a cloud walking across the mountains, the cleaving of a canoe on the bay, the drowsy violet-blue of the hills. You stroll along Governor's Walk, and a little child presses a bouquet of wild flowers into your hand so gently that you are unaware of it until the youngster has slipped away.

You blunder contentedly into a lane lined with silvering aspens, and follow its half-circle among log houses low-eaved and set with delightful disregard of thoroughfares. At the end of the lane you come suddenly upon a white colonial mansion high on a knoll, but you are too serene to wonder at this transplanted bit of New England, or to marvel at the crimson ramblers and honeysuckle climbing about the open shutters, the spacious lawn with its white lilac hedge

flowering against the domes of Saint Michael's below, or the rose garden that flings its colors against the hanging glaciers of a range fifty miles away.

It was on a morning of such aimless wanderings that I gained access to one of the most beautiful modern homes in Alaska — an American home. The place stood aloof, yet friendly, on a rocky little island about half the size of a city block. It was connected with Governor's Walk by a long wooden causeway which spanned the stretch of bay between. While I had never met Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Mills, who owned the house, I had often stood on the shore and admired the gracious slopes of their roof appearing above the surrounding trees.

On this particular morning I sauntered out along the walk to obtain a better view. Sunshine seemed to concentrate on that house. Every line of it spelled home, comfort, stability. Built of rough stone and wood, the weathered gray of its walls repeated the color of barnacled rocks below, where the tide was lapping. The windows and doors were touched with vermilion and black. The encircling garden gave glimpses of mossy spaces, bowers of wild roses and ferns, clumps of alders in tassel, and vistas of blue, blue sea between trunks of cedars and mountain ash. I kept advancing until I found myself a trespasser at the foot of a short flight of stone steps. I stopped there to look up at the quaintest door in the North.

It was set in the rough masonry of the wall under a shingled hood — a door of heavy, spike-studded planks, gray and scarred with age. Massive wrought-iron

hinges spanned it top and bottom, and it had an iron latch that invited the hand irresistibly.

'I'm glad you like my house,' a pleasant voice broke in on my absorption. I turned to see a woman in a smart sports costume emerging from the garden. Under her arm she had an 'American Mercury' and a sunshade. She stood smiling at me, a slim, clear-eyed woman with short hair, dark and touched with gray. 'The look on your face was one of the nicest tributes my house has ever received,' she continued, 'and I'd love to show it to you.'

'And I'd love to see it, Mrs. Mills. Your very door looks promising.'

'I think so, too,' she returned. 'It was the door on the old Russian saltry which occupied this island over a hundred years ago. And the rock walls, which form the lower part of my house, are the original walls of the saltry. They are seven feet thick.'

I learned that Mrs. Mills's husband had given her the island for a birthday present. 'Of course it had been deserted for years, and I didn't know whether or not I wanted to build on it,' she went on. 'So one night I came over here all alone and slept under the stars to get the feel of the place. There was something benign, something sheltering about the great stone wall; about the little island itself. And something soothing in the sound of the water laving the rocks. By morning I knew that I could build here a home, and such a home that my son, though he might wander to the end of the earth, would always want to return to its shelter.'

And so, on the stone walls that had already withstood the storms of a hundred years, she erected her house, and called it 'Island Home.'

Every window framed an incomparable vista of mountains, sea, or quaint Sitka street. In the spacious rooms yellow sunlight, shimmer of water, the clean spirit of Alaska itself, seemed to dwell harmoniously with the soft tones of old rugs, Russian mahogany furniture, cushions, books, and paintings. The sun-room was filled with flowering plants. From it a walk under a trellised tunnel of honeysuckle led to a rock garden and a grove of slim aspen trees stirring against the blue of the bay below. There were songs of wild birds, the metallic click of oarlocks as a fisherman rowed past our line of vision, and the faint skreighing of gulls circling above a school of herring far out among the islands.

In the luxurious bedroom of my hostess we stood, like two on the bridge of a ship, looking out across the bay to the mountains. 'I had my windows placed so that I might lie in bed on winter nights and watch the Northern Lights playing above the peaks,' she said.

Like a poet, this quiet woman has built, making Nature a part of her home, but she has also, like a practical housewife, spared no expense to equip her house with every modern electric convenience, from heat that responds to the pressure of a button to an electric egg-beater in her tiled, spotless kitchen.

Later, while we were having a cup of tea in the sun-room, Mr. Mills came in from his office. He owns the bank, the principal store, the sawmill, in fact more than half of Sitka, having inherited it from his father who

bought it soon after the transfer. He is a splendid representative of those pioneer Americans whose every thought and act have gone toward the upbuilding of Alaska. Clean living and honest purpose radiated from his kindly brown eyes; and, like so many Northerners of his age, he looked but forty of his sixty years.

Over our tea he told me interesting facts about the old town he loves. His department store, modern in every other detail, occupies one of the immense log buildings erected by the Russians. It was the first hospital in Russian America. Half of it is built on piling over the bay. When the property came into the Mills family, there were holes in the back floor into which, so grisly rumor states, the Russian doctors used to lower cadavers to preserve them in the salt tide below. The Community Grindstone was also a part of the old Russian mill, which my host owns to-day, and Mr. Mills remembered when citizens came to sharpen their knives and axes, paying five cents for the privilege.

From the window he pointed out to me a great, two-story, rambling log house off Governor's Walk. 'In the days of the naval régime,' he recounted, 'that was the home of the most beautiful girl in Sitka. Every man in the country was in love with her, but she married a slim, quiet young naval officer on the Pinta, which was stationed here in the eighties. That officer afterward became commander-in-chief of the United States Fleet. I wonder if he remembers those days.'

'He not only remembers them,' I was able to answer, 'but he loves them.' And I told of a day a few years ago

when the fleet lay in the Bay of San Francisco. The Admiral, slipping away from the acclaim of the Western city, had come to my tiny studio to talk, as one Sourdough to another, about the country in which the foundation of his career was laid. 'The most beautiful country in the world,' he called it, after having seen every other country in the world.

The two of us had hung over a map of Alaska while he traced, with a slender, well-kept hand, his cruisings in northern latitudes where he had explored and mapped bays and glaciers for six happy years after leaving Annapolis. In those days he had a reputation as the best pilot in Alaskan waters. His memory for details of that time was astonishing. He recalled landmarks, sunken rocks, currents; the colors of particular sunsets he had seen in the eighties; the very pattern of the paper on the walls of the old castle ballroom, where he and other young naval officers used to roller-skate; the books he had read aboard the Pinta when she lay anchored off Sitka's Indian Village.

'Alaska, with its tranquillity, brought me a peace, a philosophy of life, that has remained with me and helped me all these years,' the Admiral said, looking at me with clear gray eyes. 'I've always wanted to go back there . . . and some day I will.'

Mr. Mills nodded as I finished telling this incident. 'From admiral down to mucker, that's what they all say, once they have known Alaska,' he declared. 'I wonder what it is that wins us all?'

Then he answered himself by quoting from Alaska's 'Roughneck Poet' — Pat O'Cotter:

They come here wild, athirst for the gold
  They would win — and run away.
They lose the stake they brought along,
  And then they have to stay.
Each man follows his own lone bent,
  The mines, the hills, the marts.
Work's but a name; the end's the same:
  The country steals their hearts!

2

After I had left behind me the luxurious home of these new friends on whom Alaska has showered every favor, my thoughts went to those unfortunates whose years of allegiance have won for them nothing but a cot in the Pioneers' Home.

'The end of the trail!' I said to myself, as I crossed the green parade ground which lies directly in front of that institution.

On the long veranda facing the sea they were sitting in the sun — a dozen or more old, old men in flannel shirts and overalls faded from many washings. Crutches and canes were stowed away beneath their chairs as if to get them out of sight. Thin, corded hands lay idle on bony knees. Here and there a grizzled chin was sunk in slumber.

The end of the trail . . . Yet, was it? Somehow, my conclusion was refuted by the set of every white head before me. After a moment of puzzlement I knew the reason: In that entire line of physically broken old men *there wasn't a single dejected hat-brim!* Up in front, up at the side, tilted over one eye, up at the back — there they were, every battered, weather-beaten hat

set at a gallant angle that was a defiance to bad luck, decrepitude, Death itself!

I espied a friend I had known when I was a little girl. I had last seen him in his virile fifties, tall, great-chested Jack McCarren, joking with the loungers in front of my father's trading-post, as he shouldered a ninety-pound pack to go prospecting up the Copper River Valley. 'So long, pard! Plenty luck!' The crowd had called this prospectors' good-bye after Jack's free-stepping figure.

But the Jack I found sitting in front of the Pioneers' Home was a bowed, old, and strangely shrunken figure. As I clasped his trembling hand and brought myself back to his memory, I saw the red creep up from his neck to the edge of his white hair — the flush of a proud man forced by physical disability to accept the help of an institution. But his far-gazing blue eyes met mine squarely, and his smile had in it a hint of the old debonair days.

'I've had a bad spell of rheumatism,' he informed me. 'Three years at the Hot Springs, but it didn't do no good. Then my money gave out, and . . . I had to come here. But it won't be for long. I'm getting better every day. By next spring I'll be hitting the trail again. Got a fine prospect up on the Tolovana. Finest country you ever clapped an eye on, up there, and . . .' Then Jack, at seventy-five, launched into a programme of development which, if carried out, would fill another quarter-century. Jack — with paralysis creeping toward his heart!

In the chair next to him sat a wiry old chap from

THE PARADE-GROUND AT SITKA

In Russian days this was the site of the shipyard. The buildings in the background comprise the Pioneers' Home.

Fairbanks in the Yukon country. He was seventy-eight, and had recently had a leg amputated. 'I'm gettin' on tip-top!' he twanged cheerfully in answer to my inquiry. 'Hellendamnation! All I got to do now is learn to walk on this confounded new leg they give me!' He thrust out the wooden limb with a certain pride. 'And I got to get a hustle on, too. Here it is June a-ready, and I got to get back to Fairbanks in time to pick wild berries for the market. I figure on making a little stake so I can put down a shaft on my claim this winter. Got a rattlin' good proposition up on the left fork of the Tanana.' The old fellow went on to outline his plans, looking meanwhile into my face with eager, bright eyes, the ever-young eyes of the prospector.

While we chatted, Theodore Kettleson, superintendent of the Home, joined us. I like to think of that big, kindly Alaskan as I found him that day. 'I want you to meet the boys,' he said. And we moved down the line while he introduced each one, mentioning in each instance some distinguished act performed, some hopeful outlook. 'Mr. John Blank, who made the big strike up on the Chandalar in 1902,' he would say. 'John still has an interest up there, and any day we may hear he's "in the money" again.' Or, 'Meet Mr. Jake Hanover. Perhaps you read of the time he rescued four starving prospectors who were stranded at the foot of Portage Glacier in 1912? He's got a snug little cabin and a trap-line up in the Matanuska, and he'll be leaving us as soon as his neuritis is cured.' He knew the history of every inmate — there were over a hundred and fifty — and he introduced his 'boys,' not in

the condescending manner of an official dealing with his charges, but as a genial Sourdough presenting his Sourdough friends.

We passed into the main building and on to the library and lounging-room, where several men were reading. One huge, red-faced fellow had his hat on when we entered, but the moment he saw me he swept it off with a wide gesture of his left arm. His right arm was paralyzed.

During our talk I asked him if he thought Alaska, as a gold country, was worked out. 'Worked out — hell!' he roared. 'That's a bloody libel on the country. Alaska ain't even been scratched yet. I ain't missed a single stampede — Klondyke, Nome, Fairbanks, Iditarod, Stikine! Been to every big gold camp in the North, and I'm telling you that after all us old-timers has kicked off, there'll be a young generation of prospectors who will come in here and make bigger strikes than we ever heard of. And d'you know how they'll do it? By airplane, by hell! Airplane! Ain't you been reading how already they're flying the mail here in Alaska? Ain't you been reading 'bout that last strike up the Kuskokwim when some of the boys in Fairbanks flies to the new diggin's — stampedes, by gingo, by airplane! And they makes that distance in three hours that would have taken 'em three weeks by dog team? Yes, ma'am! It's the airplane that will really open up this Territory!' And glowing with enthusiasm, the old fellow launched into a history of air transportation in Alaska, and the feats of daring Northern pilots: how they rescued lost prospectors, transported provi-

sions to newly discovered and inaccessible mining districts, and rushed expectant mothers to hospitals.

After we had left him, Mr. Kettleson told me that the Home had been established in 1913 by the first Alaskan Legislature.

'Alaska cares for her own,' he said. 'Any Sourdough who needs help can come to the Home after he is sixty-five. Or, if he prefers, he may draw a pension of twenty dollars a month instead. All our boys here are between the ages of seventy-five and ninety-five. We have four who are in their nineties. No,' he smiled as he answered the question I'd asked him, 'you'll never find any of them here at sixty-five. Those youngsters are all in a drift some place pushing a wheelbarrow.

'They are a proud, sensitive lot. They come to the Home only as a last resort because of sickness. It breaks me all up, sometimes, to see how they weep when they arrive — some of them. But pride comes to their aid and they recover a measure of their spirit — or they pretend to. Some of them, with proper food and medical care, get well enough to leave, or to hold down small jobs. We had two chaps past eighty who go out halibut fishing during the season, and sell their catch. Another of our boys is hired by the cable office to deliver messages. He's spry as a cricket, and has adopted as his slogan that of the North-West Mounted Police: *Get your man!* You will appreciate this when you hear that Sitka has no telephone system, and people live in widely scattered sections. When a message comes for a newcomer, a cheechako, it sometimes takes

a man with detective instincts to find his man and deliver the cablegram.

'We are obliged to keep a close watch on our men, for the minute their health improves the first thing they think of is getting a gold pan and a shovel. Then they start out prospecting. Often we have to organize a searching party. It is touching to see how all the other old boys who are fit enough to join in the hunt come out to help, just as they used to do in their younger days when a partner failed to come into camp at night. Last summer two of our men got away on a prospecting trip. We found one of them at the end of three days. A month later we found the other one back of the graveyard. He had curled up under a tree and with his little pack for a pillow had gone to sleep — forever.'

Mr. Kettleson showed me through the big kitchen. It was spotless, and presided over by two white-jacketed, good-natured cooks. One long table was piled with brown, sweet-smelling loaves of bread, hot from the oven. Huge yellow crocks of peeled potatoes, carrots, and onions were ready for the evening's boiled dinner. Long pans of rice custard cooled before an open window. 'The boys deserve the best grub Alaska can furnish,' asserted Mr. Kettleson, 'and they have plenty of it.'

The hospital, modern to the last degree, is for the most part occupied by men who are bedridden with paralysis; yet I found an astonishing amount of cheerfulness there. The nurses, jolly young women of the pioneer type who have served in hospitals all over the Territory, understand how to handle these old-timers.

Like comrades on a hazardous Northern trail, patients and nurses keep up an exchange of jokes and badinage.

One old chap of eighty-two, bedridden for eight years and unable to move from the waist down, waved at me from his pillows and grinned. Then with a prodigious wink he informed me that there was absolutely nothing wrong with him, but that he chose this easy way of saving enough money to get married the following spring!

'That jolly Sourdough surely expects to get well,' I remarked, after we had gone by his room. The nurse shook her head. 'No,' she answered. 'Paralysis is now creeping into the region of his heart, and he knows, as well as we do, that it may stop beating any moment.'

But I saw one poor soul who had not the courage to pretend. Blind and paralyzed, he lay on his white bed. He was straight and still. On his gaunt, livid face was such a stricken, beaten look that my hands involuntarily came up over my eyes. Such a picture of defeat should have been sacred from the casual gaze of visitors like myself.

I was glad to leave the hospital to chat with some of the men who were in their rooms in the main building. We found these playing solitaire, or repacking their old war-bags in preparation for that hoped-for time when they should be able to leave the Home. One white-bearded patriarch, sitting beside his bed reading, had been overcome with slumber. He was leaning over against his pillow, his cheek in his hand. Despite his

years and his beard there was in his attitude that touching, little-boy quality that seems to live in men forever.

One of the most interesting and lively of all the pioneers was Old Joe Twan. He was a little thin brown man with a peg leg and a most innocent, ingenuous expression of countenance.

Joe is a 'fiddler,' and moves against a background of bygone hilarity — the swing and gayety of all the Northern dance-halls that have flourished since the eighties. In the days of his affluence he owned the most famous halls of pleasure in Wrangell and Juneau. Though nearly blind now, he saw well enough to set out for me the only chair in his tiny room, and bow me gallantly to it.

On his wall hung the old violin on which he used to play for his painted girls to dance the gold from the pockets of those miners who had 'struck pay.' At my request he took the instrument down and ran his slender hands over it before he handed it to me. 'Oh, the little feet that have danced to my music!' he exclaimed. 'But — they are all gone now. . . . Those small gay ones, they live swiftly, but not long!'

He was hopeful, even eager, in his planning for the coming year, and he used his hands expressively as he talked. 'I'm really well fixed,' he assured me, 'because I've got a fine house down in Port Angeles, Washington. I bought it just before I left there forty years ago. I left a friend of mine in charge of it. I haven't had time to go back there since. No, I haven't heard from him for about twenty years, but I know

he's looking out for it all right. I'm figuring on getting a little stake from an old partner of mine who's out prospecting now — enough to pay my fare down there. I'll sell the house then and get enough money to have an operation on my eyes. Then I can see well enough to read this new-fangled music they have now, and can follow up the new strikes,' he finished confidently. 'The boys always like my fiddling, and I won't have any trouble getting a job.'

In the small rooms the meager belongings of the men were arranged carefully — a gold pan, a full-rigged ship in a bottle, a faded photograph of a dog team, or a windlass with a fur-clad man hauling up a bucket from the shaft below. But nowhere did I see photographs that might have been the likenesses of kinsfolk. Then I remembered that these were men of the Lone Trail, whom no bonds of kin had been strong enough to hold from the hills. A lone hand they had played in their questing, foot-loose youth, as all must play who lay the foundation of an empire, and a lone hand they will play to the end.

As I was leaving the Home, I passed again by the long veranda where the old pioneers sat dreaming in the sun. I waved, intending to go on with that general impersonal good-bye. But Jack McCarren and several of the others were coming stiffly to their feet.

'So long, little Sourdough! Plenty luck!' Jack called to me from his place in that line of old men saluting with gallant battered hats lifted above their white heads.

I threw up my hand in my gayest gesture of farewell.

'So long, pardners! Plenty luck!' I echoed cheerfully.

Then I walked swiftly and blindly away so that none of them should suspect that my eyes and my heart were full of tears.

CHAPTER XI

I

Owing to the increasing number of tourists who visit Sitka each year, the old Russian town has recently acquired a taxi, which transports sight-seers over the mile-length road that leads to the Park and Lover's Lane. The cultured residents consider this vehicle not only an anachronism, but a calamity as well. It has been tolerated merely because it has never been permitted to enter the lovely solitude of the Park, which is famous among world travelers for its wilderness beauty.

During my sojourn in Sitka, the enterprising driver of the taxi began to besiege the village council for a permit to drive tourists through Lover's Lane. Naturally, a great protest went up from old-time residents, and from those wise enough to realize that Sitka's attraction, even for tourists, lies in the quaint, Old-World glamour that still lingers on in a hustling, commercial age. The issue was the important thing of the day, and everywhere Kay and I encountered discussions of the possible 'sacrilege.'

One sunny noon, plump, pretty Miss Burns, teacher of domestic science at the Sheldon Jackson Indian School, met us by the Wishing Stone. She was near to tears. 'Those awful, go-getting cheechakoes are spoiling our village!' she wailed. 'They want to paint ads on the Wishing Stone! They're going to put gravel all

over the Russian Cemetery and pull out the big spruce trees! Right now they're chopping down the aspens along the streets! They even want to plaster stucco over Saint Michael's Cathedral! And *now*, if they're permitted to run their smelly motor cars through Lover's Lane, there won't be a single place left in Sitka where we old maids can go and feel romantic!'

'Great Heavens!' exclaimed Kay, at the end of this outburst, as she grasped my hand and started to tow me along. 'If that's the case, let's get down there before the realtors get in their deadly work!'

We waved good-bye to the despairing Miss Burns, and followed the Promenade of the Russians until it dipped into the golden gloom of the woods and became Lover's Lane.

2

Sailors declare that Lover's Lane is a place of enchantment, and that men who walk there feel the presence of the women they have loved. Truly, it is beautiful enough to cast a spell, this enticing, needle-paved road that leads away through the spruce forest. And there is some quality of magic there, for one cannot walk beneath the interlacing boughs without feeling that wondering sense of expectancy that is the essence of youth and romance.

For a way, the Lane swings close to the beach, with a line of spruce trees between it and the bay. There are glimpses of quiet water, of islets resting in their own reflections, and far, far out the open sea breaking white and green in the sun.

Every step frees the spice of mellowed needles. Sunlight sifts down through the branches to tremble on the brown paths, to fleck golden-green aisles between tree-trunks, to lay patches of amber on mossy logs set with maidenhair. There is the cool, clean breath of growing things — stretches of ferns, the delicacy of thimbleberry, and in the shadows vivid toadstools of orange, and topaz, and vermilion. Now and then through the treed stillness come the lyrical notes of the hermit thrush, or the faint murmur of Indian River rippling over its stones. In such a Lane small wonder if every man summons the woman of his heart to bear him company; and every woman the lover of her dreams.

Kay and I found ourselves fashioning a man who would fit the spirit of the place. He would come down the path, tall, slim, narrow-hipped, in a hunter's fringed shirt of caribou the color of the fallen needles. High-headed and light-stepping he would be, with a tanned face and black, black hair. His feet would make no sound as he swung toward us because he would be moccasined like an Indian. He ——

Our romancing ceased abruptly. A curve in the road had brought into view a totem pole.

Against the forest green it stood out in its turquoise, crimson, white, and black coloring, its carved faces looking with wide, lonely eyes toward the sea. There was a mystic humanness about those faces that gave us a sense of hush. Silent, enigmatic, weirdly serene, they were yet eloquent with tales of native peoples — the Thlingets, the Haidas, the Tsimp-si-ans.

Farther on another pole came into view; then another. It was an unconscious tribute to the wild and positive art of the totem carver that I, who have known these strange columns all my life, started tiptoeing toward them.

Totems are not, as so many think, objects of worship. They are picture writings done in wood, cryptic records of the Indian past carved by a picturesque aboriginal people who will soon be gone from the face of the earth. Because the white man has educated the Indian of to-day to be scornful of the totems of his forefathers, this fascinating art will die with this generation. Soon the only specimens will be found in such places as the Sitka National Park, where the Government has caused to be preserved eighteen of the finest poles found along the southeastern coast of Alaska, where so many deserted Indian villages are crumbling into ruin.

As the American has his eagle, the Englishman his lion, and the Russian his bear, so the Alaska Indians have their crest animals, each clan being represented by a different creature. These appear on their totems. The heraldic totem, which is erected on the grave of a deceased clansman, generally bears but one figure, a wolf, a bear, a killer-whale. The historical pole immortalizes some great tribal event, or recounts some poetic story of Indian mythology or personal prowess. The genealogical totem, always placed before the door of the lodge, is the family tree of those residing therein. Thus a traveling brave, arriving at a strange village, can tell at a glance just where he will be welcome to stay.

Kay and I wandered off the Lane on little bypaths which led to various famous totems. On the banks of Indian River we came upon the Gambler's Totem, which is surmounted by the head of a bearded white man. The Indians have always been reticent about this column, but the story goes that a long time ago a chief, while out hunting, found a 'Boston man' lost and starving in the woods. He carried the dying one to his house and appointed his only daughter to nurse him.

After the stranger recovered his health, he paid his debt by making a checkerboard on which he taught the chief to gamble. Eventually, the white man won all the Indian's furs. The renegade then decamped, taking not only his winnings, but the chief's daughter as well. The sorrowing parent, who never heard of his child again, had the story of this 'no good' white man carved in wood as a warning to all who might see his likeness on the top of the shame-pole.

In this vicinity Kay and I found the grass-grown ridges that mark the site of the great fort which was the Thlingets' stronghold when Baranov came south to rebuild Sitka after the destruction of Fort Archangel Gabriel. Here, too, we came upon the Witch Tree, a huge hemlock with gnarled branches that are plushed with amber moss and tufted with little green ferns.

From time immemorial the Indians have held their councils under the wide boughs of the Witch Tree. Important tribal events were once recorded by driving plugs into its soft gray bark. And to it were tied those wretched ones condemned by the medicine-man to slow starvation for witchcraft.

The Witch Tree was centuries old when the Thlingets erected their fort within the length of its shadow. It has looked on Lover's Lane when that place of enchantment was a slave market; when it was the theater for the barbaric splendors of the Potlatch; and when it was the battle-ground for the bloodiest encounter ever known on Alaskan soil — the battle of Indian River.

This took place in 1804, when the determined Baranov came down from Kodiak to exact payment for the Thlingets' destruction of Fort Archangel Gabriel. Inside the fortification eight hundred Indian warriors in paint and death masks sulked and watched, until Baranov led his hundred and fifty men against them. Then white man and red fought there until the Russians were beaten back, with nearly half their number wounded, and six dead. Lisiansky, aboard his sloop of war Neva, sailed up and anchored off the mouth of Indian River. Opening fire on the fort, he made the mountains thunder to a cannonade so relentless that the Thlingets sued for peace, promising to vacate the fort at high tide.

The Russians waited. Far into the night sounded the beat of drums and the weird chanting of the shamans invoking their spirits about the Witch Tree. Then came silence. In the foggy dawn no living creature was seen except carrion crows that circled above the fortification.

Tired of waiting, the Russians went inside the fort to see why the Indians were making no effort at departure. They found that the Thlingets had slipped out the back gate into the dripping forest. Behind them they

had left the bodies of dogs and children they had slain lest their cries betray the silent flight over the mountains. The Thlinget code was 'a life for a life,' and so horrible had been their massacre of the whites at Fort Archangel Gabriel that, despite the truce, they feared the Russians must in revenge be plotting to fall upon them and destroy them.

The Witch Tree stood in the line of the Neva's bombardment. High up on its old trunk is a groove made, so the Indians say, by one of Lisiansky's cannon balls.

But for all its sanguinary past we found nothing sinister or ugly in the look of the Witch Tree. From a fairy-like glade of ferns and thimbleberry it lifts its great height, softened with moss and lichen, far above the lusty young spruce forest that is crowding it. This new growth is slowly stealing its nourishment, yet one feels that the ancient tree bears no resentment. Like an old warrior who has lived and loved life to the full, it regards the young things about it with benevolence, holding protecting branches over all. It even reaches down one long, fern-draped arm to stroke the glass-clear ripples of the river. It is a distinct and kindly personality among trees.

We left the Witch Tree to search further for totems. Presently we came out of a forest-dim trail into a cleared space like a green ceremonial circle. Rising from the center against a background of spruce and hemlock, the Totem of the Fog Woman's Children raised its cabalistic faces to the sun. At the foot of it a tall, bareheaded man was scattering crumbs for a flock

of little birds that fluttered about, perching on his head and shoulders and making themselves at home in the barbaric red and turquoise carvings of the pole.

Kay grasped my hand and jerked me behind a tree-trunk. 'Glory be!' she whispered fervently, beginning to powder her nose. 'Yonder stands the Father of Pictures!'

3

Contrary to our expectations, the tall man did not flee as we advanced with what nonchalance we could assume into the sunny circle. Though his birds flew twittering into the woods, he turned to answer our greetings, smiling in a way that was touched with shy chivalry.

But after we had introduced ourselves and chatted a moment, I could see that he was casting about in his mind for some way to make a courteous retreat. Kay considered him with straight-gazing blue eyes.

'You don't look like a man who really dislikes women,' she said.

A faint flush crept up over the artist's face. He returned her gaze for what seemed to me a long time before he answered: 'I don't. Not unless they ask me too many absurd personal questions.'

'Well, we won't do that,' replied Kay with an admirably casual air, 'at least' — she glanced at her wrist watch — 'not for half an hour. In the mean time we'd be no end grateful if you'd tell us something about totem poles.' Kay had a wonderfully winning smile. It was not without effect on the Father of

Pictures. But despite his acquiescence, it was apparent that he intended leaving us as soon as possible.

We were fortunate in meeting him just here, for it was he who had placed the totems in the Sitka Park, and placed them so artfully that the most sophisticated, coming unexpectedly upon them in their forest setting, invariably stops talking, stops walking, even as Kay and I, to ponder on the primitive mysteries of the weird monuments.

We stood in the shadow of the Fog Woman's Children, looking up at the savage magnificence of that pole which rears its sixty feet far above the top of the forest.

'It seems almost as if the great sad eyes of those images are staring into the future when the race that conceived them shall be gone,' remarked Kay.

Her thought must have struck a responsive chord in the Father of Pictures, for he turned to her, his face lighting. 'Do you feel that, too?' he exclaimed. And then, in the manner of one oblivious to everything but his interest in the subject, he continued: 'That is the largest and finest totem in Alaska. It was presented to the Government by the great Haida chief, So-no-hat. He had it carved, at a cost of more than two thousand dollars, as a memorial of thanksgiving for a wonderful year of prosperity that visited the Haidas. You see, the honored place on top is given the Fog Woman and her two children, because in the spring the fog comes up from the south bringing its children, the salmon and all vegetation. Below are the Wolf, the Eagle, the Bear, the Beaver, and the King Salmon, all crest an-

imals of those phratries who were guests at the great Potlatch given by the Grizzly Bear, this old fellow here at the bottom.'

He ran a slender hand over the painted figure of the Grizzly, and smiled. 'I sometimes think it is easier to read the meanings of these totem poles than it is to understand many of the memorials I've seen in the States,' he continued. 'But perhaps that is because I grew to understand them when I was repairing them.'

Responding to our eager queries he told us that all the totems, when they arrived in Sitka, were cracked, decayed, and nearly devoid of paint. 'In order that I might preserve their original character, I spent weeks studying with an old Indian carver before I ventured to set in the new pieces that were required. I fashioned an entirely new nose for this Grizzly.' It was odd to hear the man speak of Thlinget crest animals in a voice which still retained the cultured accent of New England.

'It is said that no white man can paint a totem like an Indian. I succeeded only because I studied the primitive pigments that were mixed with salmon-egg oil, the green-blue of copper secretions, the white that comes from lime, the vermilion and black that originates in cinnabar and in black ore. I had difficulty painting this memorial totem, both on account of its great height, and because I found, when I arranged my ropes over the top of it, that a little hermit thrush had built its nest right between the Fog Woman's Children. I was afraid my working there might frighten her away. She soon grew used to me, how-

ever, and in a few days she was eating crumbs from my hand. I practically raised her babies that year.'

He crumbled the last bit of bread and brushed his hands together. I could see he was preparing to take his leave. While I was frantically searching my mind for some remark that might hold him longer, there came from the depths of the woods three plaintive, descending notes of a bird-song which my memory links with the melting snows and bursting alder buds of Alaskan spring. The Father of Pictures turned his head in a listening attitude.

Kay remarked: 'I've always wondered which bird it is that sings that lonely, lovely little song. Some say it's the golden-crown sparrow; others that it is the hermit thrush. I'm inclined to think it is the hermit.'

'Oh, no!' he exclaimed, eager to set her right. 'Pardon, but it is the golden crown. I've been studying the little fellows for years.'

I can't tell how Kay managed, but a few minutes later the three of us were sitting in the grass, and the Father of Pictures was talking on a subject evidently dear to his heart.

'You see,' he explained, his gray eyes glowing with interest, 'those tiny, plaintive minstrels arrive from California in April, the males coming two weeks ahead of the females. They are friendly little bachelors who hobnob with me on my doorstep and eat my crumbs. For two weeks they never sing a note. Then one day, after the females come, you'll hear them calling, as you did a few minutes ago: "*Come . . . to . . . me!*" And —— Well, you heard the loneliness and appeal the

rascals manage to put into those three notes. The females find it irresistible, for they answer with two notes ——' He laughed. 'And apparently in the affirmative. All through the long, light nights of spring they call and answer in the alder groves along the sea.

'As soon as the warm days come they take their honeymoon journeys back into the foothills, and finally they go to the mountains, where they build their nests above timber-line at the edge of the snows. I have followed them year after year, tracing their ascent, talking to them, chumming with them. But invariably when we reach the nesting grounds they repudiate me. You'd think, from their suspicious airs, that they had never seen me before!'

To our delight, he went on speaking of birds as a father might speak of his children. 'Little feathered bits of God,' he called them whimsically. He made us see the brilliant plumage of the Northern flicker streaking the dim forest; the dignified dance of the crane courting his mate by the reeds of a Northern lake; the adorably absurd slumber of the golden-eye duck, who tucks his head under his wing and, with one gently paddling foot, keeps himself going in a watery circle all night. He mentioned the friendliness of wrens in the tangles of fallen timber where he sawed his wood, telling how they hopped about his feet pecking inquisitively at the falling sawdust, or perching with impudent assurance on the very back of his moving saw. 'Hark,' he said once, interrupting himself to listen to some bird-call we could not hear. 'That's the red-

throated loon. It's the call of the male to the female nesting back there in the swamp.'

The Father of Pictures forgot, apparently, that he was talking to women, for the time flew by unheeded while Kay and I listened. He was truly a master of forest lore. He knew the habits and the names of every Alaskan bird. He said he had secured photographs and specimens of one hundred and fifty-eight varieties near Sitka alone, a work he carries on without compensation, giving the results of his discoveries to visiting ornithologists and scientists.

He knew the ways of woods creatures, too, from the wee field mouse to the monstrous grizzly; and outside the books of Muir and Burroughs, I have never met with such appreciation of the minute beauties of nature. He stopped in his description of a storm in a mountain forest to tell of the exquisite tracery he found in a single filament of moss turned amber under the snow. He described morning coming to the hills with 'sunlight penciling every tree-trunk with gold.' He dwelt on the whispering breeze that came in with the evening tide at one of his camps, 'setting every little alder leaf swinging sideways on its stem.' He made us feel that every tree, every blade of grass, every lake and mountain of Alaska was endowed with personality, and that he was kin to them all.

While we sat with him there, he pointed out a dim treed aisle where devils'-clubs lifted their scepters of gold above broad green leaves translucently delicate. 'Masking their thorns with beauty, like many other things sponsored by his Satanic Majesty,' he said.

'The Thlingets call it the Witch-Bush, and it's supposed to be very potent in the weaving of spells.'

A raven flapped over our heads cawing conversationally. It perched on one of the Fog Woman's Children. 'The raven is a clever fellow,' commented the Father of Pictures. 'It is not surprising that the Indians here have selected him as the symbol of their creator.' He uttered a queer, resonant sound, which the raven promptly answered in kind. 'That's my pal, Two O'Clock,' he continued. 'He follows me everywhere. When I go into the forest to work, the rascal flaps along, and exactly on the stroke of noon he begins calling: "Two o'clock! Two o'clock!" He keeps it up until I give him some lunch.'

He told us he had sent to the States the year before for some white water-lily bulbs. After their arrival he spent a month planting them in ponds at different levels above the sea in the hope that they would thrive and make more beautiful those isolated lakes which perhaps only his eyes have seen or will see for years to come. 'I wish I might bring you some of the first blossoms,' he said, looking at Kay, who was very lovely and golden in the sunlight. 'But they have not yet bloomed. The native yellow water-lilies, on which the moose so loves to feed, are in full flower, but don't you agree with me that there is something — well, intangibly beautiful in the thought of those delicate white lilies of the South floating up there on our Northern mountain lakes? It's like — bringing a lovely woman home from a foreign land,' he finished.

Soon after this Kay introduced the subject of Indian

tribal songs. A few minutes later she and the Father of Pictures were deep in a discussion of half-tones, tempo, and other technical details. Then, illustrating his remarks, he threw back his head like an Indian, and began singing, in a very good baritone, strange minor things in Thlinget, all of which ended on the plaintive questioning note characteristic of native music. They were very short songs — the Angry Song; the Half Song; the Big Song, used at feasts after a rich man dies; the Slave Song, chanted as slaves are killed to be buried under the corner posts of a new community house. One of the Love Songs he translated for us:

> If one had control of Death
> It would be very sweet
> To die with a Wolf Woman.
> It would be very pleasant.

Then he sang the Funeral Song, called Nodding-of-Heads-to-and-Fro.

He had learned these, he said, from two Indian packers he once had, Here-is-a-Feather, and Other-Waters. Feather was a great song-maker in the tribe.

'Every night on that long trip through the wilderness,' he told us, 'those boys would sit about the campfire singing and swaying from the waist in time to their music. When they had rendered all the time-honored chants of their people, they'd make up songs about anything that came into their heads. Many had no meaning — at least to me. For instance, they'd sing a line in Thlinget, and then, with astonishing and

bewildering effect, break into English, something like this':

Ikayadé yuca qkwagéq! Kogwantan Yatqi! Ah-e-e-e-e-e!
Topeka! He marry my sister!

The Father of Pictures laughed. 'The Topeka was a steamboat,' he explained.

'The song-maker had great honor in his tribe. Months before a Potlatch he composed his songs and trained his singers to compete at the feast with the singers of other tribes.'

While we sat, the shadow of the Fog Woman's Children lengthened across the green circle. Toward the end of the afternoon we were all in such harmony that we were singing together that famous song composed by one Face-of-a-Mountain. It commemorated an occasion when the Wrangell Indians, accepting the invitation of the Sitka Kog-wan-tans, went in canoe-loads to keep the appointment, feeling sure that they would all be killed. (And they were!)

4

When Kay and I parted from the Fathers of Pictures that afternoon, we were supremely happy. He had invited us to visit his studio the following day to view his famous collection!

We went singing a duet down Lover's Lane, the minor lament of a love-lorn Indian, Dorsal-Fin-of-a-Killer-Whale-Seen, whose wife had left him. The refrain expressed his longing in the potent words:

Like one desiring whiskey, O my sweetheart!
I never sleep!

CHAPTER XII

I

It was a sunny afternoon. Birds thrilled and warbled in the woods. Before Ferndale, surf ducks paddled about the anchored Columbia River boat that belonged to the Father of Pictures. The door of his shingled house stood open, too, yet there was no answer to our knocking.

Fearing that another disappointment was ours, we were turning away when he emerged from the alders beside the house. He saw us and advanced smiling — a tall, slender, bareheaded man backed by a tangle-wood of ferns and forest. 'I've been weeding my flowers while I waited for you,' he said cordially; and I knew by the tones of his voice that despite our sex he had accepted us as friends.

We entered the studio. It was very clean and masculine in atmosphere, though utterly lacking in stale cigarette stubs and tobacco. On the bare board walls were a few pictures of hunting dogs, a cluster of cedar cones, a rack of guns. On a table near the window was an ancient bowl of pottery filled with nasturtiums. And there were shelves filled with books, and one that held some beautifully mounted birds ready for shipment to the Smithsonian Institution. In a corner was an easel on which stood a covered picture. Beneath it lay bits of moss — orange, jade, and brown — color studies from the banks of some

stream. The whole room was filled with the faint, clean smell of new-cut spruce stacked behind the heater. Like the 'soul-recalling' incense of old Japan, this fragrance seemed to have drawn the spirit of the forest to dwell within the room.

Our talk turned at once to pictures. The artist told us that the summer before he had, for two weeks, waited on the shore of a bay every night before he was able to photograph a certain aspect of the strange twilit hills of June.

'I try to catch and hold for others some of the beautiful, ever-changing spirit of Alaska,' he explained. 'Particularly do I want to give back to those who write books an equivalent of the pleasure they give to me. And there are the musicians, the statesmen, the business men, and others who are carrying on the affairs of the world. They come to Alaska, many of them. I meet hundreds every year — tired, city-dulled chaps who are traveling in the hope of regaining — what shall I call it? — the capacity to dream dreams again.' His eyes, ineffably gentle, took on a far-away expression, as if he were looking back to his own days in a crowded city.

'When we are young,' he continued, 'we all see a vision; but nearly always in the stress of life it fades; or we lose it. Then we suffer, and we seek desperately to get it back. Some of us have recovered it in the peace of Alaskan forests. But not all can stay. I like to think that my pictures go out into the world taking the healing spirit of my country to those who need it, to those who understand it.'

THE FATHER OF PICTURES

Copyright by Merrill, Sitka

THE MOUNTAIN CABIN OF THE FATHER OF PICTURES

Where millionaires have to do their own cooking.

He crossed to the covered easel and stood there looking down at us, a half smile on his tanned, sensitive face.

'Not every one needs it, I grant you,' he continued, with a gesture that was at once indulgent and humorous. 'Perhaps you noticed on your trip up here those comfortable souls who sat in the social hall of the steamer and read "True Confessions" or played bridge, or made fancy-work, their backs to the windows during the whole trip? Now I'm going to show you one of the sights they missed.'

With a quick movement he uncovered the picture on the easel.

The vigorous beauty of it made me catch my breath. It was a bit of Alaskan coast at once simple and grand. To the right Mount Edgecumbe rose dim and pearl-tinted in the early sun. Miles of ocean silvered into white-caps under a crisp breeze. Against a rocky headland a comber broke into emerald laced with spindrift. 'It's morning! Morning on the sea!' the picture called. Looking at it, I felt myself on the lifting deck of a ship, the wind in my face, my lungs filled with the freshness of a newborn day. I was an adventurer, and the whole Pacific Ocean invited my racing keel, my widespread sails!

The voice of the Father of Pictures broke through the magic of the marine: 'Perhaps you don't care for the morning,' he was saying quietly. 'Some people don't. Some are at their best at other hours of the day. I know it is that way with birds — there are those that sing best in the morning, while others pipe their

sweetest during the evening hours in the woods. . . . So I shall show you a September afternoon.'

He replaced the picture on the easel with another, carefully covered. 'You know,' he resumed, 'in Alaska we don't have the changing foliage, the flaming colored leaves that mark fall in the States. Our autumn colors come in the atmosphere, the sky. This will give you my meaning ——'

The cloth dropped. Before us lay an arm of Silver Bay drowsing in the faint promising hues that forerun the sunset. Haze on the far mountain forests gave them the texture of velvet. Above timber-line the peaks, with their lingering patches of snow, had taken on the vague, questioning amethyst of September days, a color so tender, so ethereal, that it turned the rugged range into a line of wistful hills which lay against the sky waiting — not eagerly, but dreamily, as a young girl waits for love. And all the tints of land and sky had come down to dwell in the water.

The picture gave me a sense of pause, of serenity. I was resting in the hazy, hushing spell of Alaskan September, the late afternoon of the year. My log cabin was snug and moss-chinked against the coming cold; my shed stacked with yellow wood; my cache overflowing with supplies. In the knowledge of a season's work well done, I could now launch my canoe and drift a while on those tranquil Indian-summer waters.

The Father of Pictures showed us other water-colors, always prefacing his lifting of the cloth by a sentence or two conveying a thought so beautiful that it lingered in memory like the aftertone of a bell. I felt

that he was voicing some of the things that had come to him during his years of quiet thinking in the woods and on the sea.

Many of his pictures were of the genre type — studies depicting Thlinget life, the Totem-Carver, the Canoe-Builder, the Blanket-Weaver, the Basket-Maker — pictures of aboriginal artisans at their work which will soon be found only in museums.

By means of photographs he traced for us the evolution of the Chilcat blanket. This robe of Alaskan royalty had its beginning as a crude garment of sea-otter skins bordered with gaudily printed bark-cloth. It went through many changes until it became a cloak of savage magnificence edged with fog-colored fringe and embellished with totemic designs so striking that to-day it is unique in the world of textile art.

'At one stage of its development, about the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Chilcat blanket was hung with Chinese coins taken by the Thlingets from the Spaniards in trade,' he told us. 'A chief's caste was shown by the number of rows of coins dangling from his robe. In time, the Spanish trader came no more, and Chinese coins were not available. But the resourceful Yankee sea-merchant who succeeded the Spaniard persuaded the native to use as a substitute the fine grade of pearl buttons he had for sale.'

The Father of Pictures showed us a photograph of a tall young Indian wrapped in a blanket bordered with ten rows of pearl buttons. 'This is Jim Frank, an educated Indian chief, and a great friend of mine,' he said. A smile twitched the corners of his mouth. 'One day

on the dock, when Jim stood watching the tourists swarm off a steamer, two ladies approached him. One of them — a large woman jingling with beads and bracelets — eyed Jim with the patronizing curiosity some travelers show for natives. "My dear!" she exclaimed to her companion. "What can the creature be thinking of to sew buttons on in such profusion?" Jim, who is something of a humorist, bowed. "Permit me to explain, madame," he said with his best Carlisle accent. "When a man of my tribe commits a sin he is obliged to sew a button on a blanket kept for the purpose. This is my sinning blanket." The lady gasped, and as Jim stalked away her horrified gaze followed that border which might have been a day's output from a button factory. "Imagine, my dear," she bleated, "what this country must have been before our missionaries came to civilize the heathen!"'

2

Later, the Father of Pictures brought out from a back room objects from his famous Thlinget collection. Kay and I were much interested in the basket-covered containers which held strange medicines and philters in which many of the Thlingets believe to-day. There was Medicine-That-Makes-One-Win, made from the leaves of a magic bush. If an Indian desired revenge, all he had to do was to wrap a bit of it in the clothes of his enemy. The enemy, so it was believed, promptly died.

There was a concoction distilled from flowers which must have proved a boon to gossip-mongers: Medicine-

That-Tells-Anything-That-Happens-in-Town, it was called. Medicine-That-Makes-Things-Humble was a liquid from rare roots. To make a dose efficacious the patient took a mouthful and strode along expectorating in front of him. Every man or beast he encountered instantly bowed down and became humble in his presence! And last of all, there was the love potion. With secret rites it was compounded of herbs and the tongues of birds, frogs, and mice. The Indians call it Loving-Each-Other-Medicine or Crying-for-Medicine. If used correctly by wrapping it in the desired one's garments, it causes the most scornful and indifferent person to follow *crying* in the footsteps of the one formerly rejected. If some bubbles of the rising tide are added to the philter, the longing of the follower increases with each incoming tide.

'The Thlinget believes that there attaches a peculiar potency to strange pieces of driftwood that come ashore from other lands,' our host told us as he showed us a very fine witch-killer made of such a piece of drift. It was a hammer-shaped thing about two feet long. One end of the handle was carved to resemble a horribly malignant face with an open mouth. Into the hollow mouth was inserted a sharp bone a foot long. To rid the village of a so-called sorcerer, the witch-doctor drove the bone into the skull of the accused. 'And at that,' finished the Father of Pictures, as he put the killer away, 'it was a quicker and more merciful death than burning at the stake, once so popular among our own kind.'

He had a collection of sacred Thlinget talismans

which no white man is supposed to possess. They were cunningly carved little whales and bears of stone, and weird tiny figures made of yellow cedar. Such charms the Indian hunter once wore about his neck to bring him luck in the chase or when he went fishing.

'Despite the history of blood behind many objects in my Indian collection, there is only one that really repels me,' continued the Father of Pictures, bringing out a small package. 'Drowning, you know, is the worst death that can befall a Thlinget, especially if the body is not recovered. His spirit is believed to be captured by a land-otter who turns it into a Kus-ta-ka, or Otter-Man, a fearful woods ghost that haunts the forest along streams and lakes. Here is the Thlinget conception of the Kus-ta-ka.'

He unwrapped a small wooden image. The brown body was that of a short-legged animal, but the head was a woman's head with abalone-shell eyes and teeth glittering greenly under long black human hair that fell over the face. There was such an air of lecherous cruelty, of horrible mirth, about the thing that we begged him to cover it again. 'I know just how you feel,' he said, wrapping it hastily. 'I can hardly bear to touch it myself.'

He had just returned from a trip into the interior of Baranov Island, he told us. In a hidden valley back of the glacial ridges of the coast range he has for many years been excavating and unearthing evidences of Stone Age peoples. He showed us stone axes, adzes, skinning knives, and hammers he had found there. He had also photographs of mummies. One showed a

mummy sitting up in a cave just as it had been placed by those people who roamed Alaska before the Russians; even before the Thlingets. The sight of that weary-faced sunken body lingering on after all its contemporaries have been gone for centuries filled me with sad amorphous thoughts which I was glad to banish when he brought out his trading beads.

His were not the ordinary Hudson's Bay trading beads offered for sale in Sitka's Market of the Thlingets, but rare and valuable hand-cut baubles which have cost him years of searching. Some strings he had acquired bead by bead during his journeyings among hundreds of Indian villages. As he stood in the open doorway holding them up to catch the sun, he told us something of their history. Apparently every corner of the Old World had once thrown out a colorful crystal chain to shackle the fur trade of the New. From Spain there were strings of translucent beads like sapphires, rubies, and amethysts. There were beads of amber from Russia, and of ivory from Siberia; small beads like huckleberries; delft-blue beads from England; garnets and crystals from Persia; azure and turquoise beads from China; and one long string of strange pallid beads interspersed with dentalium from the South Seas.

'Gems of the frontier!' he said, shaking them so that sunlight struck through them flecking the room with rainbows. 'Wonderful, aren't they? I never take them out without feeling their magic, which can fill my bare studio with the lure of distant lands and the romance of early trading days!'

Scholar, poet, dreamer, this apostle of beauty put the

glamour of his own vision on everything he talked about. He made Kay and me want to be with him all the time and see the world through his eyes, especially as our days in Sitka were drawing to a close. But we were careful, on this first visit, to leave before we had outworn our welcome. Our reward was his invitation to come again.

3

That night, after Kay and I had gone to bed, we lay awake a long time talking about the Father of Pictures. We wondered, as all his acquaintances have wondered, where his home had been in the States. Who had been his friends? What had brought him North? Still, he was not a man with whom one associates anything so concrete as a birthplace, home, kin. He was elusive and illusive, of the forest and the hills. We had been told that he drifted about like the mist on the sea. He would be in Ferndale one day; then, without a word as to his destination, he would disappear for days, or weeks, or perhaps months.

After we knew him better, he told us something of his journeyings into the wilderness alone. He made us feel the charm of going into the mountains, leaving behind calendar, watch, and all man-made devices for measuring time and distance. 'Those who love and know the woods don't need such things,' he said, 'no more than they need a compass.'

By exercising great self-control, Kay and I kept ourselves from asking him personal questions, and we had our reward when he began to invite us out rowing in

his Columbia River boat, which always had a bough of yellow cedar decorating its prow. He stood up to row, but when we were out among the islands he'd let the boat drift. Then he would talk about the things he loved. Once he looked off toward the mountain range rising tier on tier until its farthest ridges were lost in the lilac distance.

'Every peak means a trip to me,' he said. And he showed us where he had made various camps high above timber-line.

Kay asked: 'How do you feel when you are way up there on the crests?'

After a moment he answered slowly: 'On the mountain-tops there is a great silence that fills one with wonder — and reverence. It seems a holy place. Often as I have climbed I have felt exhilarated by the joy of motion and the rarefied air, and satisfied just with the strength of myself. I'd throw off my pack to make camp for the night, and start to shout and sing. Then I'd stop — startled. It was as if the sound of my voice had trespassed on the silence of the gods — as if I were intruding. But after this passed, I'd begin to feel big and strong and alone up there with the Source of all Power. At such times man *knows* there is something within him that is immortal.

'Many travelers have asked me why I linger in this little Northern village. They tell me I might go down to the States and make far more money. But why should I leave a place I love when I am contented and happy and have enough money for all my needs? Can a man be more than happy? Alaska has given me

perfect health, strength beyond that of the average man, and an abiding saneness. It has sharpened all my senses, until now I am totally unfitted to endure the smoke and stench of cities.'

Many of the men who advise the Father of Pictures to leave his Northern home are rich, but worn in soul and body from packing the burdens that big business in cities imposes. Some of them return to Alaska to be with this naturalist and artist. They come trying to recover their 'capacity to dream dreams' — that elusive something which all their gold fails to buy back, once they have lost it.

But the Father of Pictures is neither guide nor physician. He merely permits a man to accompany him on his loiterings. He told us that some men recover themselves quicker in the high altitudes than they do at sea level. These he takes to his mountain cabin on the shore of a little lake so high among the peaks that the snow does not go off until July. There they live the simple outdoor life of the Alaskan frontiersman, hunting and fishing only to provide themselves with food.

'A chap whose mental horizon has been fenced with dollar signs, and whose nerves are shattered by the strain of putting over big deals, will go up there with me, and in a week's time be concentrating on the proper frying of a mountain trout. Or he'll start to wondering what lies beyond the farthest range visible from the peak back of the cabin, and, though there isn't a cent in it for him, he'll plan an elaborate trip to go there to find out. You see, no matter what a man's

trouble is, Alaska cures it — if he will give it time.'

He told us of a New York artist who had somehow gone stale and was unable to complete a set of mural paintings on which his reputation depended. Some one told him of the Father of Pictures, and he came to Sitka seeking to recover his lost vision.

'But he was a city man who had never been in the woods before, and I could see that Alaska frightened him. It is so big and so still. Nevertheless, I loaded up my boat with an outfit, and one sunny morning we started out.

'I wanted to make him acquainted with the wilderness gradually, so I rowed along close to the shore. From high-tide line sprang the forest, lusty spruce trees with blue-green spines frosted with silver, and tiny crimson cones like a humming-bird's breast; yellow cedar with lacy branches pendent from the weight of little round amber cones that scented the morning with their fragrance. Sometimes the forest retreated to make room for a meadow of bluegrass and wild flowers which grew right to the edge of the boulder-bordered channel. All this was mirrored in emerald water asway with rockweed. Birds sang, salmon leaped and fell back with plopping sounds, and whales offshore sent up sighing spouts. Everywhere was the wonderful and beautiful activity of nature, yet the artist saw nothing of the beauty. The poor chap was so nervous that the leaping of a salmon made him jump; and once, when I sent out a call against the slope of Verstovia so that he might hear the echo, he looked up with positive fear in his eyes.

'In the late afternoon we came to a gravel beach where a shallow little stream spread out oie-oie-ing its way from a grove of alders. The sun was all tangled in the leaves, making the place a golden spot. I decided to camp there.

'My artist knew nothing of camp work, but in order that he might forget himself for a while, I had him help me pitch the tent. I cut poles for the foundation of the bed, while he stripped hemlock boughs for a mattress. He packed stones from the beach while I built a circular fireplace in front of the tent. Then I got a wide drift log, bored two holes in each end, drove pegs into each hole, and set this combined seat and table up in front of the fireplace. A box nailed to a spruce served as a "pan tree." After that I caught a couple of trout in the stream, and fried them with strips of bacon. We had our supper spread in the middle of the big log, which we straddled at either end. And how we did eat! That is, I ate. The poor fellow with me hardly touched his portion.

'When the dishes were washed, we went to bed, leaving the flap of the tent open. It doesn't get dark at that time of the year, you know, but twilight came, lighted by an occasional flare from a burning stick in the fireplace. Hushed, sleepy little sounds of the Alaskan night drifted in from the grove and the mountain forest back of us — the note of a bird, the call of a gull, the stir of leaves, the swash of the incoming tide rolling gravel about on the beach. And sometimes a cone fell on the tent roof. I lay serene and at rest, breathing the perfume of the woods. I could have slept

like a top if my artist hadn't twisted and turned all night long.

'As the days went by, I looked for him to get over his nervousness and begin to paint. But he did neither. He would not go twenty feet into the forest alone. And he was not a coward, you understand. It was just that his nerves were in such a state that the sights and sounds of nature filled him with the strange, inexplicable terror which alien things sometimes bring. I have known Alaskans who felt the same fear when they were in a big city.

'Sometimes my artist would get out his easel and sit before it. But he never made a brush stroke. Later, I'd come upon him back of the tent lying face down on the moss.

'Finally he gave up. He asked me to take him back to Sitka so that he might get the next steamer for the States.

'Now, I just couldn't believe that Alaska had failed me in this case, so I decided to make one more experiment before I took him back. I persuaded him that it was necessary for me to go to the Indian Village, some miles distant, and I asked him to stay behind to watch camp while I was gone. He was afraid to stay there alone, but he was too game to let me know it.

'On my return, hours later, I could not find him. I went shouting through the forest. There was no answer. I was getting worried when I finally came upon him where he huddled in the shelter of a great log. He was wet to the skin and exhausted.

'Long afterward he told me the details of that day.

When he found himself alone after my departure, his terror of the wilderness overcame him. Every branch stirring in the wind became a sly, threatening thing; every bird-call a sinister signal; the sound of the sea was a dirge whispering the futility of human life and endeavor; the gurgling of the little stream was voices shouting and laughing at him in mockery. Hoping to overcome his fearful fancies, he snatched up the fish pole and went to the creek. He slipped and fell into a deep pool. When he got out, instead of making a fire and drying himself and getting something hot to eat, as a woodsman would have done, the poor fellow crawled, miserable and exhausted, to the log and hid himself.

'Well, I got him back to camp, made a roaring fire, and soon had him sitting on our log seat drying out while I cooked dinner. You know, there's nothing like warmth and good food to banish morbid thoughts, so I served him a dinner that a king might praise — deer liver with crisp bacon, baked potatoes, hot bannock with lots of melted butter, wild strawberries in cream, and good strong coffee. Yet, all the time I was dishing it up I kept thinking regretfully: "Our trip's a failure. To-morrow I'll have to take him back to town."

'But a strange thing happened. As we sat there eating, that fellow actually became a different man before my eyes! It was just as if he had thrown off a spell. He ate more than I; and as he did so, he began to comment on the late sunlight slanting through the branches bringing out the red in the hemlock bark. He grew enthusiastic about the lacework of ferns along

the banks of the stream. That night, for the first time, he slept soundly as a child.

'He was up with the sun next morning, and the two of us, after a plunge in the surf, turned handsprings up and down the beach until we were in a fine glow. We carried driftwood to our fireplace — my artist singing with me at the top of his voice. Afterward, both of us squatted at the edge of the stream to clean the trout we had caught for breakfast.

'I remember there was a young feeling about everything that morning. Pebbles on the gravel-bar in the stream were still wet with dew. In the woods birds were stirring and beginning to send out mellow flutings. The air was clean and cool and smelled of running water. Just across the creek we could look into a little flat, cleared place in the forest that was carpeted with moss and edged with a tanglewood of high golden-green ferns. Everything was globed with dew that caught the early sunlight coming through the trees.

'Then, to complete the picture, a wonderful buck stepped out of the ferns and stood there a moment looking at us with curious soft eyes. Apparently he approved of us, for he kept coming, lifting his feet high and daintily. He waded into the water and drank when it was nearly up to his shoulders. Presently, still coming toward us, he crossed the stream and got out on the bank not twenty feet away. He shook himself in the sun until the flying water made an aura of rainbows about him. After another unhurried, friendly glance in our direction, he stepped away and was lost in the rustling alders.

'For a moment after the deer had disappeared, both of us sat enchanted. Then my artist leaped up, dragged out his neglected easel, and began to paint. And how that man did work! I could hardly coax him away for meals! . . . Did we go back to town that day? No! And not for many weeks. To-day, one of the finest sets of mural paintings in America stands as a monument to those weeks spent in our Alaskan forests.'

'And what was it that brought you to Alaskan forests?' Kay asked impulsively.

The Father of Pictures answered by smiling in a way that was kindly, indulgent, but which somehow made him suddenly remote. . . . The call of a sea-bird filled a moment's space. . . . Then he turned to point out to us the fiery-gold edges on the sunset clouds above the mountains.

4

Later, when we stepped out on the beach before Ferndale, he invited us to have dinner with him. But we had no part in the preparation of that dinner.

After we had taken off our hats in his studio and proffered our assistance, the Father of Pictures gave us to understand, in a manner very courteous and very kind, that no woman ever passed through the door leading from his studio to his living quarters.

He excused himself and disappeared.

We had known him four days, and had been with him much of that time. Unlike other men we had met, he had never asked us a personal question — or paid us a compliment. Except for that barring of us from

his living quarters he had treated us exactly as he might have treated a couple of Boy Scouts. He had given us many of his beautiful pictures; and he had done more than that for us. He had opened our eyes to beauties in nature which might have remained forever hidden from us had we not met him. Already our lives were richer because of him, yet personally he was even more of a mystery to us than when we met him.

Of course, Kay and I should have been content to let him remain a mystery, but, as we sat listening to sounds of culinary activity back in his kitchen, those forbidden rooms of his took on a masculine allure which might have astonished, and no doubt would have embarrassed, the Father of Pictures had he been aware of our thoughts.

Presently the most delicious savors floated out to increase our already keen appetites. Then our host came into the studio and set the table before the wide-open door. When dinner was served, we sat down to a real treat. Such coffee! Such hot biscuits and home-made jelly, and plates of crisp lettuce and radishes from the garden! Such mountain trout browned exactly right with crinkly shreds of bacon!

After our meal was finished, we sat there looking down the trail to the bay, where salmon leaped, and an occasional home-bound canoe glided by scattering the surf ducks. . . . Twilight came slowly in delicate waves of violet and rose and apple-green. On the far-hanging glaciers of the range the alpenglow faded to ivory. . . . Blue shadows welled up from canyons and crept down over the hills to join the deeper blue

mystery of reflected shores. On the radiant water the shadow of an island was marked by a single line of gold. 'As if,' remarked the Father of Pictures, 'when the picture was nearly perfect, the Master Artist said: "Now, just one more stroke!"'

He pointed out many bits of beauty in this way, giving them his own whimsical interpretation, while Kay and I sat listening, happy and contented. But we were also a little sad, for this was our last night in Sitka. The steamer Yukon was due before midnight and we were both going to 'the Westward.' Though our friend never mentioned our departure, I think he was sorry we were leaving so soon.

When it came time for us to go, he walked with us as far as Lover's Lane. We said good-bye, and left him standing there knee-deep in ferns, watching us as we passed on down the forest trail.

We had gone but a short distance when the deep sound of the Yukon's whistle came drifting through the clear June night.

'Our steamer!' I exclaimed joyously.

An odd look of regret passed over Kay's face. She stopped abruptly and turned to look back at the Father of Pictures.

But I, who love new roads and strange ships, felt my heart leap with eagerness to be off. Leaving Kay to come after me at her leisure, I hurried on through the twilit woods of Sitka.

In spirit, however, I was already welcoming the dawn from the deck of the Yukon — and she headed north by west toward the weird and fascinating Alaska

Peninsula, where islands rise and sink overnight, and where a new set of adventures beckoned from Kodiak, the oldest, quaintest white settlement on the Northwest coast of America.

THE END

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Portal to Romance

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